



A Commentary on  
Ibn Taymiyyah's  
*Essay On The Heart*

Annotated Translation by  
DR. ABU AMEENAH BILAL PHILIPS

سُخْرُ رِسَالَةِ ابْنِ تَيْمِيَّةَ فِي الْقَلْبِ

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# Foreword

*All praise belongs to Allaah, as such we should thank Him and seek His help. Let us seek refuge in Allaah from the wickedness within our souls and the evil consequences of our deeds. For, whosoever Allaah guides none can misguide, and whosoever He allows to go astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship besides Allaah, who is without partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and messenger.*

**B**y the will of Allaah, I stumbled across this brief essay of Shaykhul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah at a time when I felt a great need to work on my own heart. After skimming through it, I made the intention of carefully reading and translating it at some point in the future. However, shortly thereafter I was obliged to leave the Emirates and was asked by one of my students to give a farewell lecture to the attendees of our Friday morning Muslim youth program and the general public at Preston University's auditorium. After tossing around different ideas for a topic, I finally chose this essay to be the lecture and spent Thursday night until Salaatul-Fajr on Friday translating it. However, in spite of its brevity, it was too long to deliver in a one hour lecture, so, instead I delivered a summary of its essential points with a brief commentary that same morning.

After immigrating to Qatar, shortly thereafter, I decided to work on a full commentary on the essay after searching unsuccessfully for one in Arabic to translate. Al-hamdulillaah, a study circle was arranged with a local student of knowledge, Bilaal as-Suwaydee, to go through the difficult concepts and obscure expressions used by Ibn Taymiyyah and to benefit from his scholarly insights on the essay. I then taught the text with my commentary at the Qatar Guest Center.

The copy of the essay which we studied was one whose manuscript was edited by Shaykh Saleem al-Hilaalee and compared against the version found in *Majmoo' al-Fataawaa*, volume 9, pages 307-319. Shaykh Saleem, may Allaah reward

him, referenced most of the Qur'aanic verses and authenticated most of the *hadeeths* mentioned in the text, making my work on it much easier. What technical work I have done to the essay was to translate the text and relevant authentication notes of Shaykh Saleem, to reference the remaining Qur'aanic verses, most of which were paraphrased by Shaykhul-Islaam, and to reference a few *hadeeths* missed by Shaykh Saleem, as well as to refer all *hadeeths* to available English sources. Furthermore, I have added a commentary mostly composed of references from classic commentaries on the Qur'aan, books of *hadeeth* and works of scholars who have written on the subject.

In conclusion, I ask Allaah to accept this meager effort to elucidate one of the important aspect of the true religion, Islaam, to reward all of those who contributed to its composition and publication, and to put it in our scale of good deeds on the Day when we will be in need it most.

**Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips**  
**Qatar, August 2003**

## Biography of Ibn Taymiyyah

Ibn Taymiyyah's name was Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim and he was born in Harraan<sup>1</sup> on the 22nd of January 1263. In 1268, he migrated with his father to Damascus due to the Tartar attack on Iraq.<sup>2</sup> His family settled in Damascus where Ibn Taymiyyah grew up in an atmosphere of knowledge and scholarship for his father was among the leading *hadeeth* scholars of his day.

Ibn Taymiyyah's father taught in a circle at the main masjid of Damascus and occupied the post of *hadeeth* Shaykh at Dar as-Sukkariyyah where Ibn Taymiyyah began his studies.<sup>3</sup>

Before reaching puberty Ibn Taymiyyah had memorized the whole Qur'aan and studied *hadeeth* sciences as well as Fiqh (Islamic Law) and its related sciences. He sat in the circles of the major Fiqh and *hadeeth* scholars learning from them and debating with them while still a youth.

One day while on his way to the public library, a Jew who lived on the way and who had heard of him, met him and asked him some questions in an attempt to create some doubts in his mind and shake his faith. However, Ibn Taymiyyah impressed the Jew by swiftly replying to his questions. The Jew met him repeatedly and questioned him incessantly but to no avail. Ibn Taymiyyah continued to answer his questions and only became firmer in his faith and more certain of his religion. Shortly thereafter the Jew converted to Islaam and began to practise its tenets sincerely.

The people of Damascus were amazed at Ibn Taymiyyah's intelligence and quick comprehension. Ath-Thahabee said the following concerning him, "He used to attend the schools and lecture halls in his youth and would debate with his elders and dumbfound them with his arguments. Religious issues which

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1 Harraan is near Edessa, in what was once northern Iraq, but is now called Orfa and is currently a part of Turkey.

2 *al-Uqud ad-Durriyyah*, p.

3 Ibn Katheer, *al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah*, vol. 13, p. 308.

baffled the major scholars of the region would be brought to him and he would rule on them when he was only 19 years of age. From that point on he began to compile material and write.<sup>4</sup> Those who agreed with him as well as those who opposed some of his ideas used to praise him and his books caused his fame to spread wider and farther. The total number of books which he wrote was somewhere in the neighbourhood of 300 volumes.<sup>5</sup>

In his compendium *ath-Thahabee* said, "Ibn Taymiyyah sat in his father's place in the main masjid on Fridays and give a commentary on Qur'aan from its beginning. In one session he used to dictate from his memory enough material to fill two notebooks or more. His Friday commentary on Soorah *Nooh* alone lasted for a number of years.

Ibn Taymiyyah easily delved into the most intricate meanings of the Qur'aan with his sharp intellect. In his lectures, he would purposely choose the problematic areas, clear away the obscurities and deduce unprecedented meanings from the Qur'aan. He also memorized an incredible number of *hadeeths* along with their chains of narration and he excelled in his comprehension of the schools of Islamic law and their differences, as well as the rulings of the *Sahaabah* and *Taabi'oon*. His ability to recall the opinions of individual the *Sahaabah* and *Taabi'oon* when necessary to prove a point dazzled those who heard him or read his works.

When he gave rulings, he would not limit himself to any particular school of law, but would rule according to what appeared to him to be most accurate. He used to defend and support the methodology of the early generations of righteous scholars (the *Salaf*) and support their position against the scholastics, philosophers and Sufis. In his defence he would always rise to the defence of the *Sunnah* with the clearest proofs and the strongest evidences. Kamaalud-Deen ibn az-Zamlakaanee said the following, "If Ibn Taymiyyah was asked about a particular area of knowledge, both the questioner and those present would think, by the depth of his answers, that it was the only area that he knew and swear that no one knew as much as he did [on the topic]. When the legal scholars sat with

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4 *al-Uqud ad-Durriyyah*, p.

5 *Tathkirah al-Huffaaz*, p.



him they benefited from his knowledge concerning their own schools. He was free from worldly desires and only got pleasure out of seeking knowledge, spreading it and acting on it.”

In the field of *hadeeth*, its narrators and its sciences, he had no equal during that period. In fact his contemporaries were reported to have said, “Any *hadeeth* not memorized by Ibn Taymiyyah must be unauthentic.” He had knowledge of the *hadeeth* narrators, their reliability and their generations, the authentic and weak *hadeeths*, along with his memory of their texts and chains of narrators. Al-Bazzaar said, “The major books of *hadeeth* like *Musnad Ahmad*, *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*, *Saheeh Muslim*, *Jaami’ at-Tirmitheeh*, *Sunan Abee Daawood*, *Sunan an-Nasaa’ee*, *Sunan Ibn Maajah* and *Sunan ad-Daarquṭṭnee* were read by Ibn Taymiyyah several times. There were few books of religious knowledge which he had not read and Allaah had granted him a strong memory and made him slow to forget. He was a reference source for the scholars of his day for identifying which of the books particular *hadeeths* were to be found.

‘Imaadud-Deen al-Waasitee said, “Ibn Taymiyyah was the most reliable and accurate scholar of his time. He was also the most generous of them and the one who followed the Prophet (ﷺ) most closely. We did not see anyone in whose statements and actions the prophethood manifested itself more than in him. So much so, that every good heart would bear witness that his way of adherence was the correct method of doing so.” Damascus during the era of Ibn Taymiyyah was the cradle of leading religious scholars like an-Nawawee, Ibn Daqeeq al-‘Eed, al-Mizzee and Ibn Jamaa’ah all of whom used to study *hadeeth* and other related fields of knowledge in order to distinguish between the authentic traditions and those which were falsified or inaccurate.

The most prominent movement that appeared in Ibn Taymiyyah’s period was the theological debate between the

## Hambalites<sup>6</sup> and the Ash'arites<sup>7</sup>. In the opinion of Hambalite

- 6 The scholar to whom this *math'hab* is attributed is Ahmad ibn Hambal ash-Shaybaanee, who was born in Baghdad in the year 778 CE. He became one of the greatest memorizers and narrators of *Hadeeth* of his time. Concentrating on the study of *Hadeeth*, Ahmad studied *Fiqh* and *hadeeth* science under Imaam Abu Yoosuf, the famous student of Abu Haneefah, as well as under Imaam ash-Shaafi'ee himself.

Imaam Ahmad went through a series of persecutions under the caliphs of his time due to their adoption of Mu'tazilite philosophy. He was jailed and beaten for two years by order of Caliph al-Ma'moon (rule 813-842 CE), because of his rejection of the philosophical concept that the Qur'aan was created. Later set free, he continued teaching in Baghdad until al-Waathiq became caliph (rule 842-846 CE) and renewed the persecution. Imaam Ahmad stopped teaching and went into hiding for five years until Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847-861 CE) took over. Caliph al-Mutawakkil ended the inquisition permanently by expelling the Mu'tazilite scholars from positions of authority and officially rejecting their philosophy. Ahmad continued to teach in Baghdad until he died in the year 855 CE.

Imaam Ahmad's greatest concern was the collection, narration, and interpretation of *Hadeeth*. His teaching method consisted of dictating *hadeeth* from his vast collection known as *al-Musnad*, which contained over 30,000 *hadeeths*, as well as the various opinions of the *Sahaabah* concerning their interpretation. He would then apply the *hadeeth* or ruling to various existing problems. If he could not find a suitable *hadeeth* or opinion to solve a problem, he would offer his own opinion while forbidding his students to record any of his own solutions. As a result, his *math'hab* was recorded, not by his students, but by their students. (*Evolution of Fiqh*, pp. 84-5)

- 7 Ash'arites were followers of Abul-Hasan 'Alee ibn Ismaa'eel al-Ash'aree (873-935 CE). He was born and raised in Basrah. As a student and later a scholar in his own right, he espoused the Mu'tazilite thought of his teacher and mentor, al-Jubbaa'ee, until he reached the age of forty when he publicly announced his repentance from it and proved its falsehood. He later abandoned the way of the philosophers all together and adhered firmly to the way of the People of the Sunnah. As for those who name themselves after him, they built on his opinions at the time of his philosophical revolt against the Mu'tazilites and became a sect of their own which only recognizes seven divine attributes that, according to them, the human intellect indicates. They interpret the remaining attributes of Allaah as manifestations of the seven mentioned in the following line of poetry.

حَيِّ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ وَالْكَلَامُ لَهُ • إِزَادَةٌ وَكَذَلِكَ السَّمْعُ وَالْبَصَرُ

*Living, knowing, able, and He has speech, \* will and likewise hearing and sight*

They also have many other innovative statements regarding the meaning of

scholars, the basic sources of religion clearly provided what human beings needed in both legal and theological matters. Consequently, in their study of the Islamic creed, they extracted the principles of theology directly from the texts of the Qur'aan and the *Sunnah* in the same way that they extracted laws for issues of *Fiqh*. On the other hand, Ash'arite scholars and others took the paths of the philosophers and the Mu'tazilites<sup>8</sup> seeking to prove the fundamental principles of the Islamic creed by reason and logic. Ibn Taymiyyah found himself at the center of this controversy and it subsequently became for him a source of many trials and tribulations. He wished to return theology to its primary sources, free from the trappings of philosophical argumentation and conventional opinion, and based on uncritical faith, at a time when the Muslim state supported *Fiqh* scholars and scholastics who opposed him. Consequently, Ibn Taymiyyah's life became a continuous series of run-ins with legists, scholastics, Sufis and government officials. As soon as he finished one ordeal, he would be drawn into the midst of another. The great Islamic historian Ibn Katheer, recorded many of the trials faced by Ibn Taymiyyah in his classical work.<sup>9</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah was also greatly concerned about his own society that had fallen victim to both external and internal enemies. On the borders of Islamic lands the Tartar armies were poised threatening the Islamic state and its civilization by constant attacks. He had not forgotten what had happened to him and his family as a result of such raids and the difficulties they had faced in forced emigration from their homeland when he was only seven. Consequently, Ibn Taymiyyah spared no effort in combating the enemy that had beset the country. He actively urged Muslims to take up arms against the enemy in order to

speech, ability, etc. (*Sharḥ Lum'atul-I'tiqaad*, p. 163)

- 8 Mu'tazilites are followers of Waasil ibn 'Aṭaa who excluded himself from the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Bagree and affirmed that sinners are in limbo between belief and disbelief and that they will remain forever in the hellfire. 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd followed him in this belief. They both denied the divine attributes like the Jahmites, denied Allaah's Qadar relative to human actions like the Qadarites, and claimed that one who does major sins will be eternally in hell like the Khaarijites. (*Sharḥ Lum'atul-I'tiqaad*, p. 163)
- 9 *Al-Bidaayah wa an-Nihaayah*, vol. 14, events of the years 705-828.

purify their lands. And whenever he visited the encampments of Muslims engaged in Jihad, he would encourage them to hold firm, assure them of victory and inform them of the virtues of Jihaad and of those who took part.<sup>10</sup> He was in the front lines in the battle of Shaqhab (1303 C.E.) prior to which he ruled that the soldiers should break their Ramaḍaan fast to strengthen themselves for the battle and broke his fast in front of them. He used to pass his nights on watch on the city walls.

Because of his well-known courage and daring, the masses used to turn to him in times of grave difficulty. Hence, when the Tartars invaded Syria in 1300 C.E. and reached the outskirts of Damascus, people met with Ibn Taymiyyah and requested him to head a delegation to be sent to negotiate with the Tartar King, Qazan, to ask him not to enter Damascus. When they met the King, those present were amazed at the boldness and courage with which Ibn Taymiyyah spoke to him. Among the things he said to the King is the following: "You claim to be a Muslim and you have with you a (Muslim) judge, an Imaam (for *Salaah*), a Shaykh and people to call the *Athaaan* or so I am told. Your father and grandfather were both disbelievers, yet they did not do what you have done. They both made promises and fulfilled them while you pledged and betrayed it, you promised and did not fulfil it." The speech had such an effect on Qazan that he asked who Ibn Taymiyyah was, saying that he had never met anyone more firm than he, nor anyone whose words had had a greater effect on him.<sup>11</sup> Qazan subsequently gave his word not to enter, Damascus.

On the day of the battle, *Marah as-Safar*, in the same year, a sense of hopelessness from the devastation wrought by the Tatars hovered over almost everyone. The prices of food and goods had risen and a feeling of futility spread throughout the region as the Tartars wanted to take possession to the Damascene citadel. Qabjaq wrote to the deputy governor of the fortress telling him to surrender the fortress to them until the situation improved. However, no sooner had the news reached Ibn Taymiyyah than he went to the deputy governor and wrote to him saying, "If

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10 *Al-A'laam al-'Aliyyah*, p. 69.

11 *Ibid*, pp. 72-3.

only a single stone remains in the fortress, do not surrender it to them, if you do not have to." The deputy governor, Arjuwash, accepted his opinion and sent a reply to Qabjaq stating that they would not surrender the fortress as long as an eye blinked within it. Consequently, the fortress became an inaccessible stronghold protecting Muslims from their enemy.

In the year 1301, word spread that the Tatars were at the outskirts of Damascus preparing to attack and people began to flee for their safety, leaving the region to the enemy to loot and pillage. So Ibn Taymiyyah hurriedly went to the Sultans and governors of Egypt requesting their aid. He warned the Sultan of Egypt saying, "If you abandon the region and refuse to defend it, we will put over it those who will protect it and profit from it during peace time. If it were destined that you were not rulers of the region, nor its Kings, and a Muslim sought your support against his enemy, it would be compulsory for you to help him. How could that be and you are the rulers of the region, the people are your subjects and you are responsible for them?"<sup>12</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah's bravery was not limited to nationalistic issues. His love for Islaam and his devotion to its principles occupied most of his thought and drove him to dedicate much of his time to purifying it from blemishes and innovations that were raging out of control and threatening to consume the society. He considered the appearance of fables, innovations and reprehensible actions in Muslim lands a sickness of the soul that indicated the eminent collapse and fall of the society. Consequently, this area took a major portion of his time and efforts and was the cause of the many accusations raised against him and the countless ordeals that he faced.

In fact, Ibn Taymiyyah's bravery and courage was strongest whenever he was faced with trials and adversity. Because of his desire to reform society of the many evils that had become popular customs, Ibn Taymiyyah appeared to be an antisocial malcontent and his life was one of constant adversity and trial. He openly opposed all of the corrupt and deviant elements in the society especially the esoteric (Baatinite) cults and sects like the Isma'ilites, Qaraamites, Sufis and Shi'ites.

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12 *al-Bidaayah wa an-Nihaayah*, vol. 14, p. 15.

Despite his firmness on issues of faith, he was also gentle, kind and forgiving where the situation demanded it. For example, on one occasion, Sultan Qalawun encouraged him to issue a ruling allowing the execution of the scholars who repeatedly ruled that he be imprisoned and supported his enemies, but Ibn Taymiyyah refused to exploit the opportunity and take revenge against those who intended him harm. Instead he said to the Sultan, "Whoever seeks to offend me is free to do so, but whoever offends Allaah and His messenger, Allaah will take revenge on him. As for you, if you kill them, you will not find after them others like them."<sup>13</sup>

### HIS ORDEALS AND DEATH

According to human nature, the more famous a man becomes the more numerous are those who are jealous of him and hostile towards him. Ibn Taymiyyah's critical tongue and pen left him few friends, for he never flattered anyone nor did hypocrisy find any room in his heart. In most of his trials, his judges were his opponents among the legists who found his opposition to their rulings and opinions intolerable.

His first trial was in 1306 C.E. when he was taken to Egypt based on an order for his imprisonment issued by the Sultan. When he was brought before the judges and legists, he tried to defend himself; however, they did not allow him to do so. Ibn Makhloof accused him of saying that Allaah actually sits on His throne and speaks with letters and an actual voice. Ibn Taymiyyah then asked him who would judge him. When Ibn Makhloof replied that he would, Ibn Taymiyyah asked him how he could judge him while being his opponent. This question angered Ibn Makhloof who promptly ordered his immediate imprisonment. He remained in jail for a year before some Egyptian scholars went to the deputy Caliph, Sayfud-Deen Salar, and sought his permission to try to get Ibn Taymiyyah to retract some of his beliefs. However, whenever they requested his presence, the Shaykh refused to come before them until they lost hope and left him alone. In the beginning of the following year (1308 C.E.), the

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13 *al-Bidaayah wa an-Nihaayah*, vol. 14, p. 54, events of the year 705 A.H. (1306 C.E.).

chief judge, Ibn Jamaa'ah, met with Ibn Taymiyyah in the fort and spoke with him about leaving the prison, but he refused to leave unless the restrictions and conditions placed on him were lifted. A month later, Prince Huṣaamud-Deen Muhannaa ibn 'Eesaa himself came and visited him in jail and affirmed that he could leave the prison free to say and believe what he wished. After the restrictions were lifted and conditions dropped, Ibn Taymiyyah left the prison with the prince and passed the night in the home of Prince Salar with a delegation of scholars and legists. Salar had the Shaykh reside with him in Egypt in order that the masses would realize his merit and his knowledge.

Towards the end of the year 1308 C.E., some prominent Sufis accused Ibn Taymiyyah of heretical beliefs and the legist, Ibn 'Aṭaa, raised a number of unsubstantiated claims against him. However, the state authorized the courts to look into Ibn Taymiyyah's case. Some of the judges held that the claims were false and Ibn Jamaa'ah was of the opinion that the claims against him were due to him being ill mannered to the Sufis. The state then gave him a choice of either going to Alexandria or Damascus, on condition that he refrain from speaking against Sufism, or going to prison. Ibn Taymiyyah chose prison life over being outside the prison walls muzzled. However, some sincere friends of Ibn Taymiyyah insisted that he travel to Damascus with them, and he reluctantly complied. After passing one night in Damascus, a letter was sent ordering his return to Egypt. He came before Ibn Jamaa'ah and a group of legists, some of whom openly stated that the state wished to imprison him. Chief Justice, Ibn Jamaa'ah, asked a Maalikite judge to rule that Ibn Taymiyyah be imprisoned, but the judge refused saying that he found nothing at fault with him by which to sentence him. The chief Maalikite majistrate, Noorud-Deen az-Zawaanee, was also asked to pass judgement on him, but he also refused to make such a ruling. When Ibn Taymiyyah saw the bewilderment on their faces, he presented himself voluntarily for imprisonment saying, "I will go to jail by myself and continue to follow whatever is for the welfare of Muslims."<sup>14</sup>

The judge insisted that the Shaykh be put in a place suitable

for a man of his standing, but he was told that the state would not accept anything less than prison. So he was sent to prison on the instruction of Naasirud-Deen al-Mambajee. Ibn Taymiyyah remained in prison making rulings on perplexing issues raised to him by the people, until he was set free and sent to Alexandria. He stayed for a while in Alexandria during which time he was constantly harassed and intimidated. There the Sufis denounced him to the Sultan and even tried unsuccessfully to have him assassinated to be free of him once and for all. They did, however, succeed in having him imprisoned in Alexandria once again, but on this occasion, all of his main students and those who subscribed to his thought were jailed along with him. He continued to be persecuted within the prison walls until Sultan Muhammad ibn Qalawun came to power. The first thing that the new Sultan did was to release Ibn Taymiyyah from his imprisonment in 1310 C.E. and invite him to Cairo from Alexandria. The Shaykh left the prison respected and honored, and came to meet the Sultan who subsequently tried to make peace between him and the legist who ruled that he be imprisoned.

Ibn Taymiyyah preferred imprisonment to a life in which one was forced to be a hypocrite or to remain silent about corruption. Hence, his life continued to be one of intermittent freedom between long periods of imprisonment. The magistrates and legists would seek to gain the Sultan's favour by hastily issuing rulings against him. However, during all these ordeals, Ibn Taymiyyah never became grieved nor did he despair and give up his attempts to correct misunderstanding held by the masses about Islaam. He used to comfort his companions by saying, "What can my foes do to me? My garden and orchard are inside me; wherever, I go they are with me. If they imprison me, it is a religious retreat (*i'tikaaf*), if they expel me from my homeland, it is a migration (*hijrah*) and if they kill me my death will be martyrdom in the path of Allaah. Allaah's scripture and His Prophet's *Sunnah* are in heart."

The last ordeal to befall the Shaykh took place in 1326. A ruling he made concerning the visit of masjids and graves of saints and the undertaking of journeys to them was distorted to imply that he forbade visiting graves, including the Prophet's grave. In fact, he did not prohibit the visitation of graves, but merely forbade



the undertaking of journeys to other than the three masjids mentioned by the Prophet (r) in the well-known *hadeeth*, “Do not undertake journeys to other than three masjids.”<sup>15</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah had sufficient proof to silence his opponents; however, they only wished to seal his mouth and stop his pen. Consequently, in the middle of the year, 1326, a decree from the Sultan was read in the main masjid of Damascus in which Ibn Taymiyyah was prohibited from giving any religious ruling and it announced that he was to be placed under arrest. When Ibn al-Khaatiree came to him in Damascus and informed him of the decree, he said, “I was expecting that. There is great good and much benefit in it.” He then went to the fort in chains and a week later the chief magistrate ordered the arrest of his companions and his students. Some of his students betrayed him, but their names were announced in condemnation in the market places and the streets. The Shaykh remained imprisoned for two years reading and writing and secretly teaching until a ruling was made to remove all of his books, papers, and even his inkwells and his pens. His books, which numbered about sixty volumes and papers consisting of fourteen notebooks, were taken to the library at an Islamic religious institution called al-’Adliyyah al-Kabeerah. The magistrates and legists went to the school, looked at them and then divided them up among themselves. In 1328, within three month after the Shaikh was prevented from reading and writing, he passed away in prison at the age of 65.

The Shaykh’s funeral was a classic example of Imaam Ahmad ibn Hambal’s statement, “Tell the innovators: the difference between you and us will be evident in the number of those who attend our funerals.” Ibn al-Barzaanee said, “The people of Damascus gathered for his funeral in such large numbers that not even a powerful Sultan or a comprehensive census could assemble so many together.” Ibn Katheer added to that statement the following, “Even though the man died a prisoner of the Sultan in his fortress, and many legists and Sufis attributed a number of distasteful matters to him, those were their words about him and this was his funeral. There is a great difference between the actual situation and what is said about it.”

## CHAPTER: *Purpose of the Heart*

**S**haykh Ibn Taymiyyah said: Indeed Allaah - May He, on high, be glorified - created the human heart in order for them to know things<sup>16</sup> in the same way in which He created the eye to see things and the ear to hear things. [Allaah] - may He be glorified - created every part of the human body for a specific purpose and a particular function. Thus, the hand [was created] for grasping and holding, the foot for walking, the tongue for articulating speech, the mouth for tasting,<sup>17</sup> the nose for smelling, the skin for touching, and likewise the remainder of the internal and external limbs and organs.<sup>18</sup>

If a person uses a limb according to the way it was created to be used and for the purpose for which it was designed, that is the clear truth and justice on the basis of which the heavens and

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- 16 Shaykhul-Islam, Ibn Taymiyyah, immediately begins his essay by identifying the higher purpose of the heart. That the heart pumps blood throughout the body was known then, as it is known now, however, as he proposes, the primary function of the heart is spiritual and not physical. Consequently, Ibn Taymiyyah, neglected to mention its physical function when comparing it to other limbs whose functions are primarily physical.
- 17 Actually it is the tongue that tastes, however, based on the general custom of putting things in the mouth in order to taste them with the tongue, the author attributed taste to the mouth.
- 18 Over the centuries, Western scientists have claimed that certain organs of the body were functionless, simply because they could not identify their function only to discover later that they had specific functions essential to the body. The Darwinian theory of evolution was often used to justify some of these claims. Scientists speculated that during the early stages of human evolution these organs had a function but later they became superfluous. The appendix is one such organ. As a result surgeons routinely removed appendixes whenever surgery in the area was required. Ibn Taymiyyah points out here that all limbs are blessings from Allaah created for specific functions. The All-Wise Creator did not create anything purposeless as He stated:

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ

“Do you think you were created in without purpose and that you would not have to return to Me?” (Soorah al-Mu'minoon, 23: 115)

earth were set up.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, that is better and beneficial for that limb and its owner, as well as for the function for which it was used. Such a person is truly righteous whose state of being is upright and such people are following guidance from their Lord and it is they who will be successful.<sup>20</sup>

If the limb is not used in the proper way<sup>21</sup> and, instead, it is left unused, that is a loss, and its owner is cheated.<sup>22</sup> If it is used

- 19 There are a number of verses in the Qur'aan in which Allaah has stated that He created the heavens and earth in truth (*bil-haqq*). For example:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ

“It is He who created the heavens and earth in truth.”

(Soorah al-An'aam, 6: 73)

See also, 15: 85; 16: 3; 29: 44; 30: 8 and 39: 5. Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah here explains that the truth in which they were created is that they be utilized according to the prescribed purpose for which they were created; that they be used in ways pleasing to Allaah and in accordance with His instructions. Ibn Katheer explained that “truth” here meant “justice”. (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 3, p. 383)

- 20 The author here paraphrases the following Qur'aanic text and works it into his discussion:

أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًىٰ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“Those are following guidance from their Lord and they are those who are successful.” (Soorah al-Baqarah, 2: 5)

- 21 The “proper way” is the way pleasing to Allaah; the way in accordance with the divine commandments, also known as the *sharee'ah*.
- 22 The author here refers to a concept found in the following well known *hadeeth* on human delusion regarding spare time or, as it is commonly known in the West “time to kill”:

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ (( نِعْمَتَانِ مَعْقُونٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ الصِّحَّةُ وَالْفَرَاغُ ))

Ibn 'Abbaas related that Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: “There are two blessings about which most people are cheated: health and spare time.”

(Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 8, pp. 282, no. 421).

Regarding this *hadeeth* Ibn Battaal said: “The meaning of the *hadeeth* is that a person is not free until he has whatever is sufficient for himself and his physical health is good. Whoever finds that should be careful that he not be deceived by abandoning giving thanks to Allaah for the blessings He has bestowed on him. Among the expressions of gratitude to Him is strictly following His commands and avoiding His prohibitions. Whoever, fails to do so is deceived. And he indicated by the phrase “Many people” that those who are blessed to not be deceived are very few.”

in contradiction to what it was created for,<sup>23</sup> that is misguidance

Ibn al-Jawzee said: “A person may be healthy but not free due to being busy with earning a living, or he could be without need [for earning a living] and not be healthy. If the two factors come together and laziness from acts of obedience overcomes him, he is deceived. The full [picture] is that this world is the farm of the next world. In it is business whose profits will appear in the next life. So whoever uses his free time and health in doing acts of obedience is in an enviable position, fortunate, and blessed and whoever uses them in acts of disobedience is deceived. Because, free time is followed by busy time and health by sickness, even if it is only old age.”

At-Teebee said: “The Prophet (ﷺ) made a parable of a trader who has capital and seeks profit along with the safety of his capital. His way to achieve that is to be careful about whom he deals with, to adhere to the truth and to be skillful in order to not be deceived or cheated. Good health and free time is capital and he should deal with Allaah with *eemaan*, and fight his desires and the enemy of religion in order to profit from the best of this world and the next. What is close to it is Allaah Most High’s statement:

هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ

“Shall I show you a trade which will save you from a severe punishment?”

(Soorah as-Saff, 61: 10)

What is required of him is that he avoid obedience to his soul’s desires and dealings with Satan in order not to lose his capital along with his profits. And his statement in the *hadeeth*, “many people are deceived regarding them” is similar to Allaah’s statement:

وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرُونَ

“Few of my servants are thankful.”

(Soorah Saba, 34: 13)

“Many” in the *hadeeth* is equivalent to “few” in the verse.” Al-Qaadee and Aboo Bakr ibn al-‘Arabee: “There is a difference of opinion regarding the first and foremost blessing of Allaah on His creatures. Some said *eemaan*, others said ‘life’ and others said ‘health’. The most appropriate is the first as it is a general blessing while life and health are only worldly blessings. And they are only real blessings if they are accompanied by faith. And this is where many people are deceived regarding them. That is, their profits are lost or diminished. Whoever lets the reins loose to his evil commanding soul which eternally desires pleasure and abandons adherence to the [divinely set] limits, and consistency in doing acts of obedience has been deceived. Similarly is the case, if he is not busy. For the busy person could have an excuse, in contrast to the person with free time. His excuse is removed and evidence can be brought against him.” (*Fat’h al-Baaree*, vol. 11, p. 275, no. 6412)

23 If the limb is primarily created for use in obedience to Allaah, its use in contradiction to this purpose would be utilizing it in disobedience to Allaah. Use of the limbs to do sinful acts is misuse of the limbs that is a result of misunderstanding and misguidance, which will lead ultimately to one’s

and destruction and its owner is among those who exchanged the blessings of Allaah with disbelief.<sup>24</sup>

The master of all limbs and their head is the heart, as it has been named *qalb* "heart".<sup>25</sup>

قال النبي ﷺ (( إِنْ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضغَةٌ إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ ))

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Indeed in the body there is a clump of flesh, if it becomes good,<sup>26</sup> the whole body becomes good, and if it goes bad, the whole body goes bad. Indeed it is the heart."<sup>27</sup>

destruction.

- 24 Ibn Taymiyyah here makes the misuse of limbs the interpretation of Allaah's statement in *Soorah Ibraaheem*:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا

"Have you not seen those who exchanged Allaah's blessings for disbelief?"  
(14: 28)

Al-Bukhaaree quoted Ibn 'Abbaas as saying that this verse was in reference to the people of Makkah (*Fat'h al-Baaree*, vol. 8, p. 229) Ibn Katheer went on to say: "This includes all the disbelievers, for Allaah sent Muhammad (ﷺ) as a mercy and a blessing to all humankind. Those who accepted this blessing and were thankful for it will enter paradise, while those who denied it and disbelieved in it, will enter the fire." (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 5, p. 353)

- 25 The heart was called *qalb* because it is the essence of what the body contains and the essence of everything is its heart. (*Fat'h al-Baaree*, vol. , p.)
- 26 In Ibn Maajah's collection *saluḥ* *saluḥa* (*Sunan Ibn-i-Majah*, vol. 5, pp. 306-7, no. 3984 and authenticated in *Saḥeeḥ Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 2, p. 362, no. 3219) is used while in the narrations of al-Bukhaaree and Muslim *saluḥ* *salaha* is used.
- 27 *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 1 pp. 44, no. 49 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3, p. 840, no. 3882. The author mentions only the last portion of the *hadeeth* that is the section relevant to the topic of discussion. The complete *hadeeth* is as follows:

الثَّغْمَانُ بْنُ بَشِيرٍ يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ (( الْحَلَالُ بَيْنَ وَالْحَرَامِ بَيْنَ وَبَيْنَهُمَا مُشْتَبِهَاتٌ لَا يَعْلمُهَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَصَنَ اتَّقَى الْمُشْتَبِهَاتِ اسْتِبرَاءً لِيَدِينَهُ وَعِبرَ ضِيهِ وَمَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ كَرَاعَى يَرَعَى حَوْلَ الْحَمَى يُوشِكُ أَنْ يُوَالِقَهُ أَلَا وَإِنْ لَكَ مَلِكٌ حَمَى أَلَا إِنْ حَمَى اللَّهُ فِي أَرْضِهِ مَحَارِمَهُ أَلَا وَإِنْ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضغَةٌ إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ أَلَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ ))

An-Nu'maan ibn Basheer quoted the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) as saying, "The Halaal is clear and the Haraam is clear, but between them are

obscure areas not known to most people. So, whoever avoids doubtful areas has protected his religion and his honor, and whoever falls into doubtful things falls into the Haraam. Just as the shepherd who grazes his animals at the border of a sanctuary will soon graze them in it. Beware, every king has a sanctuary, and the things that Allaah made unlawful are His sanctuaries. Indeed, in the body there is a clump of flesh, if it becomes good, the whole body becomes good, and if it goes bad, the whole body goes bad. Indeed it is the heart.”

Allaah has placed in the heart a warner for each of us whenever we approach evil. This is evident from the *hadeeth*, in which the Prophet ﷺ said, “Allaah has laid down a parable of a straight path. On each side is a wall with open doors and curtains hanging down over the open doors. At the top of the path there is a caller saying, ‘Go straight, all of you, on the path and do not deviate.’ Above him is another caller who says, whenever anyone tries to open any of those doors, ‘Woe to you! Do not open it, for if you (do so), you will go through it.’ The path is *Islaam*, the open doors are the things that Allaah has forbidden, and the curtains hanging down are the limits of Allaah. The caller at the top of the path is the *Qur’aan* and above him is the (one who) admonishes for Allaah’s sake and who is present in every Muslim’s heart.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, nos. 16976, 16978 and authenticated in *Saheeh al-Jaami’ as-Sagheer*, vol. 2, pp. 721-2, no. 3887) This warner is sometimes referred to as the conscience. If careful attention is paid to its warnings, the individual’s inner thoughts and outer actions improve and the warnings in turn get stronger. If the warnings are ignored, the outer actions and inner thoughts become increasingly destructive and the signals become progressively weaker until they can no longer be perceived. This state is referred to by Allaah as blindness. In many cases, despite their weakness, these signals never die out, because if they did, the possessor of such a heart would never be able to repent. Allaah, in His supreme mercy, has allowed the signals to continue so that an individual may spend a good portion of his life doing evil, yet change totally in the latter years of his life and die among the righteous. (*Islamic Studies: Book 4*, p. 123)

Ibn Hajar commented on the Prophet’s stress on the heart saying: “He specified the heart for that because it is the leader of the body; when the leader is good the followers become good and when he becomes corrupt so do the followers. [The statement] contains a notation about the great importance of the heart, encouragement to reform it and an indication that pure earnings have an effect on it. The intent that is connected to it is the understanding that Allaah has placed in it.

It is also used to prove that the mind (*‘aql*) is in the heart. Proof is also in the Almighty’s statement:

فَتَكُونُ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا

“That they have hearts by which to understand.”

(Soorah al-Hajj, 22: 46) 8: 179

قال النبي ﷺ (( الإسلام علانية وإيمان في القلب، ثم أشار بيده إلى صدره وقال: ألا إن التقوى ها هنا ألا إن التقوى ها هنا ))

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said:  
 “*Isaam is done externally and Eemaan (faith) is in the heart.*”

And His statement:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ

“Indeed there is a reminder in it for one who has a heart...”

(Soorah Qaaf, 50: 37)

The Qur’aanic commentators said it meant “the mind” and that He referred to it as the heart because it is the place where [the mind] resides.” (*Fat’h al-Baaree*, vol. , p. ) Ibn Katheer quoted well-known student of Ibn ‘Abbaas, Mujaahid, as saying: “It means a sound understanding with which he comprehends, or a good mind.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 9, p. 243)

An-Nawawee said in his commentary on *Saheeh Muslim*: “Aboo Haneefah and the philosophers held that the mind was in the brain and the doctors held that it was in the head ... Their proof was that whenever the brain went bad the mind went bad. Among the ways the brain goes bad is epilepsy, according to them. However there is no evidence for them in that argument because Allaah, Most Glorious and High, made it customary that the mind go bad whenever the brain goes bad in spite of the fact that the mind is not in it. And there is nothing to prevent that.” (*Sharh Saheeh Muslim*, vol. , p.,)

From the time that Dr. Christiaan N. Barnard made the first heart transplant in Cape Town, South Africa, on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1967, on Louis Washkansky, who lived for 18 days, until University of Louisville surgeons Laman Gray and Rob Downing replaced Robert Tools’ heart with an AbioCor, self-contained mechanical heart in Louisville, Kentucky, USA, on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2001, and who lived on for five months ([www.courier-journal.com](http://www.courier-journal.com)), the relationship between the heart and the mind has been questioned by many Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is sufficient for us to say that it appears that the mind, which is a function of the soul, resides in the location of the heart and is not actually contained within the physical organ called the heart. Regarding the heart mentioned in these *hadeeths*, Shaykh al-Albaanee said: “The heart, which is where faith, righteousness and God-consciousness (*taqwaa*), as described in various texts resides, is not the same as the piece of flesh. Rather, it is the essence a peson’s life, both body and soul. (*Silsilah al-Hudaa wan-Noor*, no. 12). This [spiritual] heart has its influence on the whole body. When a believer’s heart is replaced by a non-believer’s heart, we cannot expect the believer to flip upside down.” (*Ibid.*, no. 262)

Then he pointed with his hand to his chest saying: “*Indeed fear of God resides here! Indeed fear of God resides here.*”<sup>28</sup>

- 28 *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 3, pp. 134-5 (CD 11,933) from Anas ibn Maalik and Ibn Abee Shaybah in *al-Eemaan*, no. 6. It was ruled inauthentic by al-Albaanee in his edits of *al-Eemaan*, p. 5, and *Sharḥ al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaawiyyah*, pp. 427, 434. However, the last phrase “*Indeed fear of God resides here,*” and the Prophet’s pointing to his chest are found in other authentic narrations. For example:

عن أبي هريرة قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: (( لا تحاسنوا ولا تتاجسوا ولا تباغضوا ولا تدابروا ولا يبيع بعضكم على بيع بعض وكونوا عباد الله إخوانا المسلم أخو المسلم لا يظلمه ولا يخذله ولا يحقره الثموى هاهنا ويشير إلى صدره ثلاث مرات بحسب امرئ من الشر أن يحقر أخاه المسلم كل المسلم على المسلم حرام دمه وماله وعرضه ))

Aboo Hurayrah quoted the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) as saying: “Don’t be jealous of each other, don’t hold grudges against each other, don’t out-bid each other to raise the price, don’t oppose each other, don’t enter into a transaction when the others have entered into that transaction, and be as fellow-brothers and servants of Allah. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He neither oppresses him, nor humiliates him, nor scorns him. Fear of God resides here, (and while saying so) he pointed towards his chest thrice. It is sufficient evil that a Muslim should scorn his brother. Everything belonging to a Muslim is inviolable for another Muslim; his blood; his wealth and his honor.” (*Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1361-2, no. 6219)



## CHAPTER: *Function of the Heart*

**A**s the heart was created to know things, its pursuit of things out of a desire for knowledge is [called] thought and reflection, just as the ear's pursuit of speech desiring to hear it is [called] listening, and the eye's attention to things trying to view them is [called] sight. Thus, thought relative to the heart is like listening relative to the ear and sight relative to the eyes, etc. If [the heart] comes to know what it reflected on, that was its goal, likewise, if the ear hears what it listened for, or the eye sees what it looked at.<sup>29</sup>

How many thinkers do not find the knowledge [they seek],<sup>30</sup> just as many looking for the new moon do not see it, and many listening for a [particular] sound do not hear it. Its opposite is one who is given knowledge of something which he did not reflect on nor did he have previous knowledge about it,<sup>31</sup> like one who suddenly sees the crescent moon without intending to do so or one who hears a statement without listening out for it. All of this<sup>32</sup> is due to the fact that the heart by itself accepts knowledge.<sup>33</sup> This issue depends on [the fulfillment of certain]

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29 Attainment of these goals is not automatic, though we tend to take it for granted. Each and every one of them is actually one of the many blessings granted by Allaah, as the author amply illustrates in the following paragraph.

30 Philosophers seeking the purpose of life, scientists searching for the origin of life, etc. Many people may read the Qur'aan but only those who fear God and believe in the unseen, establish regular prayer and spend in charity from their wealth gain the knowledge of guidance from it.

31 Many scientific "discoveries" fall under this category. Like the proverbial apple falling on Isaac Newton's head.

32 Ways of attaining knowledge without actually seeking it.

33 The heart naturally understands matters in the same way that the eye naturally sees and the ear naturally hears. Training may help the heart to understand things better as training may help the eye to notice what it may overlook and the ear may hear sounds or words that it would not normally distinguish. Furthermore, as the eye is given the ability to distinguish between different objects and the ear between different sounds, the heart has a natural disposition to believe in God as Almighty Allaah stated:

conditions and the preparedness [of the organ].<sup>34</sup> It could be [the

{ وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْنَا بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ (172) أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ }

“When your Lord drew forth from the loins of the children of Aadam their descendant and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): ‘Am I not your Lord?’ they said, ‘Yes, we testify to it.’ (This) in case you say should say on the Day of Judgement, ‘We were unaware of this.’ Or in case you should say, ‘It was our ancestors who made partners (with Allaah) and we are only their descendants. Will you then destroy us for what those liars did?’” (Soorah al-A’raaf, 7: 172-3)

And Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was reported by Aboo Hurayrah to have said,

(( كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُولَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ أَوْ يُنَصِّرَانِهِ أَوْ يُمَجِّسَانِهِ كَمَا مَلَ الْبُهَيْمَةَ تَتَّبِعُ الْبُهَيْمَةَ هَلْ تَرَى فِيهَا جَذَعَاءَ ))

“Every child is birth in a state of Fitrah, then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian. It is like the way you help animals give birth. Do you find among their offspring a branded one until you brand them yourselves?” (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 8, pp. 389-90, no. 597 and Sahih Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1398, no. 6423)

Furthermore, the heart is naturally able to distinguish between good and evil due to the ability that Allaah placed in each and every heart.

فَالْهَمَّهَا فَجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

“He inspired it [to know] what corrupts it and protects it.”

(Soorah ash-Shams, 91: 8)

‘Imraan ibn Husayn said that a man from the Muzaynah or Juhaynah tribe came to Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) and asked him: “O Messenger of Allaah! Do you consider the actions of humankind and their struggles preordained for them and written for them in Qadar, or something written for them only after the message came to them from their prophet, when there will be evidence against them?” He replied, “Rather it is something preordained for them.” The man exclaimed, “Then what is the point of our actions?” The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, “Allaah makes the way easy for whoever He created for each of the two abodes. Confirmation of that is in Allaah’s Book: ‘By the soul and He who created it, and then inspired it [to know] what corrupts it and protects it.’” (Sahih Muslim, vol. 4, pp. 1394-5, no. 6406)

34 For example, among the conditions for the eye to see the crescent moon is

result of] a human act and thereby be what was desired or it could come as a favor from Allaah and be a talent.<sup>35</sup>

that it is the correct time of the month, that the sky not be cloudy, that one be in a physical location in which it can be seen. Preparedness to see the new moon would include, for example, having twenty-twenty vision or a working telescope.

Also Allaah states that He will not guide those who are disbelievers (2: 264; 5: 67; 9: 37), oppressors (2: 258; 3: 86; 5: 51; 6: 144; 9: 19; 9: 109) and corrupt (5: 108; 9: 24; 9: 80). Thus, those who are corrupt, oppressive and disbelievers are unprepared to accept guidance.

The Prophet (ﷺ) gave an example of preparedness with regard to his message in the following *hadeeth* narrated by Aboo Moosaa:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*Indeed the divine guidance and knowledge that Allaah sent me with is like abundant rain which fell on some land. Some of the land was pure and clean and accepted the water, so from it grew much vegetation... And the water reached another wasteland, which could hold no water nor grow plants. This is the example of one who was given understanding of the religion and benefited from what Allaah has sent me with, so he studied and attained knowledge. And (the other parable is) the example of one who does not lift his head toward it nor accept Allaah’s guidance with which I was sent.*” (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 67, no. 79 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, pp. 1233-4, no. 5668)

- 35 An example of someone gifted with the truth is Zayd ibn ‘Amr ibn Nufayl who was among the *haneefs* and about whom the Prophet (ﷺ) said that Allaah would resurrect him as an *ummah* by himself

زَادَ أَبُو أُسَامَةَ فِي رِوَايَتِهِ . وَسُئِلَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ عَنْ زَيْدٍ فَقَالَ : يَنْعَثُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أُمَّةً وَحْدَهُ  
بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ . وَرَوَى الْبَغَوِيُّ فِي . الصَّحَابَةِ . مِنْ حَدِيثِ جَابِرٍ نَحْوَ هَذَا  
الرِّيَادَةِ

(see *Miftaah Daarus-Sa‘aadah : Mawaani’ qabool al-haqq*, vol. 1).

‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Umar related that the Prophet (ﷺ) met Zayd ibn ‘Amr ibn Nufayl in the valley of Baldah before the beginning of revelation and a meal was presented to the Prophet (ﷺ) but he refused to eat from it. Then it was presented to Zayd who said, “I do not eat anything which you slaughter in the name of your stone idols. I only eat those things on which Allaah’s name was mentioned at the time of slaughter.” Zayd ibn ‘Amr used to criticize the way the Quraysh slaughtered their animals saying, “Allaah has created the sheep, sent water for it from the sky and grown grass for it from the earth; yet you slaughter it in other than the name of Allaah.” He used to say so because he rejected that practise and considered it a great evil.

Ibn ‘Umar also narrated that Zayd ibn ‘Amr went to Syria inquiring about a true religion to follow. There he met a Rabbi and asked him about his religion saying: “I intend to embrace your religion so tell me something about it.” The Jew said, “You cannot embrace our religion without receiving your share of Allaah’s anger. Zayd replied: “I am only running from Allaah’s anger and I will never bear any of it as long as I’m able to avoid it. Can you

The righteousness and correctness for which the heart was created is that it understands things. I do not say that it only knows things, for someone could know something and not understand it,<sup>36</sup> he could even be negligent of it or reject it.<sup>37</sup> The

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tell me of another religion.” He replied: “I don’t know any other religion except the *haneef*.” Zayd inquired about it and he replied, “It is the religion of Abraham who was neither a Jew nor a Christian and he only used to worship Allaah alone.” Then Zayd left and asked a Christian scholar and asked him the same question he had asked the Rabbi. He replied, “You cannot embrace our religion without receiving your share of Allaah’s curse. Zayd replied: “I am only running from Allaah’s curse and I will never bear any of it as long as I’m able to avoid His anger and His curse. Can you tell me of another religion.” He replied: “I don’t know any other religion except the *haneef*.” Zayd inquired about it and he replied, “It is the religion of Abraham who was neither a Jew nor a Christian and he only used to worship Allaah alone.” When Zayd heard their statement about the religion of Abraham and when he came out, he raised both of his hands in prayer and said: “O Allaah, I make you my witness that I am on the religion of Abraham.”

Asmaa bint Abee Bakr said: “I saw Zayd ibn ‘Amr ibn Nufayl standing with his back against the Ka’bah saying: ‘O people of Quraysh, by Allaah, none among you are on the religion of Abraham except me.’ He used to save the lives of little girls whose fathers wanted to bury them alive, saying to them: ‘Don’t kill her, I’ll feed her for you.’ He would then take them and raise them. When they grew up he would offer them to their fathers saying: ‘If you want her now, I will give her to you. If not, I will continue to feed her on your behalf.’” (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 5, pp. 106-8, no. 169)

- 36 Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) alluded to this reality in the following *hadeeth*:  
 عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ ثَابِتٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: (( نَضَّرَ اللَّهُ أُمَّرَأً سَمِعَ مِمَّا حَدِيثًا فَحَفِظَهُ حَتَّى يُلَاقَهُ فَرَبٌ حَامِلٌ فِقْمَهُ إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ أَفْقَهُ مِنْهُ وَرَبٌّ حَامِلٌ فِقْمَهُ لَيْسَ بِفَقِيهِ ))

Zayd ibn Thaabit quoted the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ): “*May Allaah brighten one who hears a hadeeth from us, memorizes it and passes it on to others. For perhaps one who carries knowledge may take it to someone of more understanding than himself and perhaps one carrying knowledge has no understanding of it.*” (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 3, p. 1038, no. 3652; *Sunan Ibn-i-Majah*, vol. 1, p. 131, no. 230, and authenticated in *Saheeh Sunan at-Tirmidhee*, vol. 2, p. 337, no. 2139)

- 37 Iblees is a classical example of someone knowing yet rejecting knowledge. Another example is the Prophet’s uncle, Aboo Taalib, who raised the Prophet (ﷺ) from childhood and defended him after his prophethood, yet, on his deathbed; he refused to declare his faith. Christians and Jews of earlier times as well as some current scholars among them had knowledge of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) but denied and continue to deny his prophethood,

one who understands something is one who is able to specify its limitations, accurately define it, be conscious of it, and confirm it in his heart.<sup>38</sup> In time of need it is sufficient for him,<sup>39</sup> and his

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as Allaah describes them in the Qur'aan:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ آبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ  
يَعْلَمُونَ

**“Those who I gave the scripture know it as they know their own children. Indeed a group of them knowingly hide the truth.”**  
(Soorah al-Baqarah, 2: 146)

- 38 The *hadeeth* on the gift of understanding of the religion is to be interpreted in this context.

عَنْ حَمِيدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ مُعَاوِيَةَ خَطِيبًا يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ يَقُولُ مَنْ  
يُرِدُ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يَفْقَهُهُ فِي الدِّينِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا قَاسِمٌ وَاللَّهُ يُعْطِي وَلَنْ تَزَالَ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةُ قَائِمَةً  
عَلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ مَنْ خَالَفَهُمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ

Mu'aawiyah related in a sermon that he heard Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) say: *“If Allaah wants good for a person, He makes him understand the religion. I am only a distributor, while the granter is Allaah. This nation will continue to follow the commandments of Allaah, unharmed by those who oppose them until Allaah's command [for the Day of Judgement] takes place.”* (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 61, no. 71)

For the gift of understanding the religion (*fiqh*) to be a blessing, the understanding would have to be accepted in the heart and manifest on the limbs. Otherwise, it would have to be accepted that among those divinely blessed with understanding are orientalist (Western non-Muslim scholars of Islaam) and some Muslims scholars who understand the detailed rulings of the *sharee'ah*, however they do not act on them and even rule against them. Such a technical understanding is a result of academic pursuit for fame and notoriety whose consequence is very severe in the next life.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) had informed that among the first people thrown in the hellfire would be a Muslim scholar who would be asked about the knowledge he was given and he will reply that he taught the religion for Allaah's sake. However, his claim will be rejected and Allaah will tell him that he taught the religion for praise and admiration which he received in the worldly life and there would be no reward for him in the next. He will subsequently be dragged away on his face and thrown in Hell – may Allaah save us from such disgrace. (Sahih Muslim, vol.3, p.1055, no.4688)

- 39 He does not seek other avenues to escape from the implications of his understandings. When a circumstance demands a particular understanding or the ruling according to it, he applies it without hesitation, knowing that it is sufficient for him, as Allaah stated:

مَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ

actions match his statements,<sup>40</sup> his internal is the same as his external.<sup>41</sup> That is one who is granted wisdom **and whoever has**

“It is not befitting for a believing man or woman to have a choice if Allaah and His Messenger have decided a matter.”

(Soorah al-Ahzaab, 23: 36)

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

“Allaah will provide an escape for whoever fears Allaah and He will provide sustenance for him from where he did not expect it.”

(Soorah at-Talaaq, 65: 2-3)

- 40 Actions contradicting statements is among the signs of little or no faith. It is among the attributes of those whom Allaah hates.

كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

“That you say what you do not do is greatly hated by Allaah.”

(Soorah as-Saff, 61: 3)

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تُلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

“Do you command people to do righteousness and forget yourselves, though you read the scripture? Will you not reflect?”

(Soorah al-Baqarah, 2: 44)

As is commonly said in the West, “Actions speak louder than words.” Most parents tell their children not to lie because they know lying is evil. In fact they will often punish them for lying. However, if someone calls the house whom they do not wish to speak with, they foolishly tell their children to inform the caller that they are not at home, or that they are busy when they are not. All their instructions and punishments are nullified by their actions. Many parents, doctors and administrators instruct the public that smoking is harmful to health, yet they publically smoke themselves. They do so, because it is their job to do so.

- 41 This is the consequence of one who obeys the Qur’aanic command to avoid both aspects of sin:

وَذَرُوا ظَاهِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ

“Leave the external aspects of sin as well as its internal aspects.”

(Soorah al-An’aam, 6: 120)

The external aspects of sin may be avoided for a variety of reasons, none of which are connected with faith. For example, it may be avoided out of fear of embarrassment or legal punishment, or it may be abandoned because it is no longer fashionable or one simply becomes tired of it, etc. Consequently, when a person finds a situation where they are certain they cannot get caught or found out or it become fashionable again, they will unhesitatingly and knowingly commit the most heinous sins. Only when the sin is rejected internally, when its pleasure becomes loathsome due to effects of true faith on the heart, will the individual abandon sins even though there is no chance of getting caught or it becomes popular. Knowledge alone will not prevent sin. It is important for identifying some sins that custom and culture may have disguised. Only the comprehension of knowledge based on true faith

been given wisdom, has been given a great good.<sup>42</sup>

Abud-Dardaa<sup>43</sup> said: "Some people are given knowledge and are not given judgment. Indeed Shaddaad ibn Aws<sup>44</sup> was

will transform it into external action consistent with the implications of the knowledge.

42 Ibn Taymiyyah refers here to the following verse from *Soorah al-Baqarah*:

وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

"Whoever has been given wisdom, has been given a great good."

(2: 269)

The quality of wisdom is so prized that the Prophet (ﷺ) made an exception for it with regard to the sin of jealousy.

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مَسْعُودٍ قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: لَا حَسَدَ إِلَّا فِي اثْنَتَيْنِ رَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا فَسَلَّطَ عَلَيْهِ هَلْكَتَهُ فِي الْحَقِّ وَرَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْحِكْمَةَ فَهُوَ يَقْضِي بِهَا وَيُعَلِّمُهَا

'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood quoted the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying: "Jealousy is only allowed in two cases: a person whom Allaah has given wealth and spends it in righteousness and a person whom Allaah gave wisdom and he judges by it and teaches it [to others]." (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 62, no. 73 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 2, p. 389, no. 1779)

'Alee ibn Abee Talhah reported that Ibn 'Abbaas said that "wisdom (*hikmah*)" is knowledge of the Qur'aan. For instance the abrogating and abrogated verses, the clear and unclear, what they allow and what they disallow, and its parables." *Tafseer at-Tabaree*, vol. 5: 576 (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 2, p. 59)

43 'Uwaymir ibn 'Aamir was from the Khazraj tribe of Madeenah. He accepted Islaam after the Battle of Badr, however, he participated in the Battle of Uhud and those following it. The Prophet (ﷺ) made him the brother of Salmaan al-Faarisee. He was among the leading jurists from among the Companions and among the few that settled in Damascus. Anas ibn Maalik, Aboo Umaamah, 'Abdullaah ibn 'Umar, Ibn 'Abbaas among the Companions narrated *hadeeths* from him. Abud-Dardaa died in Damascus in the year 33 AH. (*Usud al-Ghaabah*, vol. 4, pp. 306-7)

44 Aboo Ya'laa Shaddaad ibn Aws ibn Thaabit was from the Khazraj tribe of Madeenah and was a nephew of Hassaan ibn Thaabit. His father participated in the Battle of Badr and was martyred in the Battle of Uhud. Shaddaad lived in Hims (Syria) and died in Palestine in the year 58AH at the age of 75. (*Al-Ishaabah*, vol. 3, pp. 319-321)

among those given [both] knowledge and judgment (*hukm*)<sup>45</sup>.<sup>46</sup>  
 This is the case in spite of the fact that people vary in their

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45 The term *hukm* has a variety of meanings (rule; government; control; judgment, decision; clause; principle [*Al-Mawrid*, p. 483]) and is used in the Qur'aan in reference to Allaah as well as His creatures. There are a number of references in the Qur'aan to the prophets being given *hukm* along with the scripture. In reference to Prophet Jesus, Allaah said: **"It is not befitting for a human being that Allaah give him scripture, judgment, and prophethood then he tell people: 'Worship me instead of Allaah.'**" (*Soorah Aal 'Imraan*, 3: 79); In regard to Prophet Loot **"And I gave Loot judgment and knowledge."** (*Soorah al-Anbiyaa*, 21: 74); Regarding Moses in **"And when he reached adulthood and matured I gave him judgment and knowledge."** (*Soorah al-Qasas*, 28: 14) As-Sa'dee said: "*hukm* by which he knew the legal rulings in order to judge between people." (*Tayseer al-Kareem ar-Rahmaan*, p. 719); In reference to the prophets in general the Almighty also said: **"They are those who I gave the scripture, judgment and prophethood..."** (*Soorah al-An'aam*, 6: 89);

Both Daawood and Sulaymaan were noted for their wisdom however Allaah mentioned a particular case: **"When Daawood and Sulaymaan gave judgment concerning the field in which a people's sheep grazed at night, I was witness to their judgment and I made Sulaymaan understand it. And to each of them I gave wisdom (*hukm*) and knowledge."** (*Soorah al-Anbiyaa*, 21: 78-9) Ibn Jareer recorded that Ibn Mas'ood said: "Grapes which had ripened and their bunches were spoiled by sheep. Daawood ruled that the owner of the grapes should keep the sheep. Sulaymaan said: 'Not like this, O Prophet of Allaah!' Daawood asked: 'How then?' He replied: 'Give the grapes to the owner of the sheep and let him tend them until they grow back as they were, and give the sheep to the owner of the grapes and let him benefit from them until the grapes have grown back as they were. Then the grapes should be given back to their owner, and the sheep back to their owner.'" This was also reported by al-Awfee from Ibn 'Abbaas [*Tafseer at-Tabaree*, 18: 475] (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 6, pp. 472-3);

Allaah describes Himself with the dual attributes *hakeem 'aleem* (most wise and most knowledgeable) or *'azeez hakeem* (most mighty and wise) throughout the Qur'aan.

46 Ibn Abee Khaythamah collected a statement of the companion, 'Ubaadah ibn Saamit, in which he was reported to have said: "Shaddaad ibn Aws was among those [few] who were given knowledge and discernment (*hilm*) and among people are those given only one of them." (*Al-Isaabah*, vol. 3, p. 319) The term *hilm* also has numerous meanings (patience; mildness; tolerance; clemency; discernment; discretion, etc.). The meaning "discernment" is very close to "wisdom" and "judgment".



ability to understand things from perfect to deficient,<sup>47</sup> and in the amount they understand from a little to a lot, and from general to precise, etc.

These three organs<sup>48</sup> are the main means of gaining knowledge and understanding it, of understanding what is liked and disliked and of distinguishing between those doing good for the person and those doing evil,<sup>49</sup> etc. By [“knowledge”] I mean the knowledge that distinguishes between humans and other animals, outside of what they share with them like, smell, taste and touch.<sup>50</sup>

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئاً وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Almighty Allaah said:

**“Allaah extracted you from the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing and made for you hearing, sight and hearts,**

47 This ability may also vary from circumstance to circumstance, whereby; one may have perfect understanding of a matter on one occasion and an imperfect understanding of the same matter on another. It could also vary from subject to subject. One may have perfect understanding of a particular subject while on the same occasion having an imperfect understanding of another subject matter. The point here is that these variations do not affect the general principle that the heart is supposed to reflect and understand matters to which it is exposed in order to transform them into actions and not just simple acquire knowledge of them. The degree of a person's responsibility will vary according to his or her ability to understand the issues.

48 Hearing, sight and emotion.

49 Adult humans are able to understand or deduce the hidden reasons behind actions, while animals and children are not. For example, a cow may be fed regularly order to be fattened for slaughter and consumption. Relative to the cow, the humans who fed it were doing what was good for it, but their intentions of killing it, relative to the cow, were evil.

50 Even the senses of smell, taste and touch can provide such knowledge when interpreted by the human mind. For example, something might smell good, taste nice and feel comfortable and yet be harmful or it may smell bad, taste terrible and feel uncomfortable and yet be beneficial. Animals, like children, are unable to distinguish in many circumstances what is actually harmful or beneficial to them. The author here focuses on the senses of sight and hearing as these are the most frequently used sources for gathering information. Their dominance is reflected in the frequent Qur'aanic references to them to the exclusion of the others.

that perhaps you would give thanks.”<sup>51</sup> (Soorah an-Nahl, 16: 78)

And He said:

ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِهِ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

Then he made him and blew in him from His spirit and made for you hearing, sight and hearts.<sup>52</sup> [But] you rarely give

51 Ibn Kathir explained that “Allaah mentions His blessings to His servants in that He brought them from their mothers’ wombs not knowing anything, then He gives them hearing to recognize voices, sight to see visible things and hearts – meaning reason – whose seat, according to the correct view, is the heart, although it was also said that its seat is the brain. With reason, a person can distinguish between what is harmful and what is beneficial. These abilities and senses develop gradually in a human being. The more he grows, the more his hearing, vision and reason increase, until they reach their peak. Allaah has created these faculties in human beings to enable them to worship their Lord, so they use all these organs, abilities and strengths to obey their Master.

Aboo Hurayrah narrated that Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:

(( إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَالَ مَنْ عَادَى لِي وَلِيًّا فَقَدْ آذَنْتُهُ بِالْحَرْبِ وَمَا تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيَّ عَبْدِي بِشَيْءٍ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا افْتَرَضْتُهُ عَلَيْهِ وَمَا زَالَ عَبْدِي يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالثَّوَابِلِ حَتَّىٰ أَحْبَبْتُهُ فَكُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ الَّذِي يَسْمَعُ وَبَصَرَهُ الَّذِي يُبْصِرُ بِهِ وَيَدَهُ الَّتِي يَبْطِشُ بِهَا وَرِجْلَهُ الَّتِي يَمْشِي بِهَا وَإِنْ سَأَلَنِي لِأَعْظِيئِهِ وَلَئِنْ اسْتَعَاذَنِي لِأَعْيُنِهِ وَمَا تُرَدِّدْتُ عَنْ شَيْءٍ أَنَا فَاعِلُهُ تَرَدِّدِي عَنْ نَفْسِ الْمُؤْمِنِ يَكْرَهُ الْمَوْتَ وَأَنَا أَكْرَهُ مَسَاعِدَهُ ))

“Allaah says: Whoever takes My friend as an enemy, has declared war on Me. My servant doesn’t draw near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than his doing what I have enjoined upon him. And My servant keeps drawing nearer to me by doing voluntary deeds until I love him. And when I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his vision with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask Me for anything, I would give it to him. If he were to call on Me, I would respond, if her were to seek refuge in Me I would grant it to him. I do not hesitate to do anything as much as I hesitate to take the soul of My believing servant, because he hates death and I hate to harm him.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 8, pp. 336-7, no. 509)

The meaning of the *hadeeth* is that when a person is sincere in his obedience to Allaah, all his deeds are done for the sake of Allaah, so he only hears for the sake of Allaah, he only sees for the sake of Allaah – meaning he only listens to or looks at what has been allowed by Allaah. He does not grasp or walk except in obedience of Allaah, seeking Allaah’s help in all of these things.” (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, vol. 5, 499-500)

52 Ibn Kathir said that “hearts” here meant “reason.” (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, vol. 7, p. 609)

thanks.<sup>53</sup>” (Soorah as-Sajdah, 32: 9)

And He said:

وَلَا تَقْتَفِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

“Do not say what you have no knowledge of.<sup>54</sup> Indeed the hearing, sight and heart will all be questioned.<sup>55</sup>”

(Soorah al-Israa, 17: 36)

And He said:

وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَأَبْصَارًا وَأَفْئِدَةً

“He made for them hearing, sight and a heart...”

(Soorah al-Ahqaaf, 46: 26)

53 According to Ibn Katheer this meant, “You rarely give thanks for these strengths with which Allaah has provided you. The one who is truly blessed is the one who uses them to worship and obey his Lord, may He be exalted and glorified.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 7, p. 610)

54 Qataadah said, “Do not say, ‘I have seen,’ when you did not see anything, or ‘I have heard,’ when you have heard nothing, or ‘I know,’ when you don’t know, for Allaah will ask you about all of that.” (*Tafseer at-Tabaree*, 17: 446) Ibn Katheer went on to say: “In conclusion, what they said means that Allaah forbids speaking without knowledge and only on the basis of suspicion, which is mere imagination and illusions. As Allaah says: “**Avoid most suspicion for some suspicions are sinful.**” (49: 12) and in *hadeeth*:

أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ يَأْتُرُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ: (( إِيَّاكُمْ وَالظَّنَّ فَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ أَكْذَبُ الْحَدِيثِ ))

Abou Hurayrah quoted the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying: “Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the most false form of speech.” (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 7, p. 56, no. 74 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1361, no. 6214)

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ: (( مَنْ تَحَلَّمَ بِعَظْمٍ لَمْ يَرَهُ كَلَّفَ أَنْ يَعْتِقِدَ بَيْنَ شَعِيرَتَيْنِ وَلَنْ يَفْعَلَ ))

Ibn ‘Abbaas related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Whoever claims to have seen a dream he didn’t see will be given the job of making a knot with two grains of barley and he will never be able to do it.” (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 9, pp. 134-5, no. 165). [*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 5, pp. 622-3]

55 Ibn Katheer said that it means, “The person will be asked about them on the Day of Resurrection, and they will be asked about him and what he did with them.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 5, p. 623)

And He said:

حَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةً  
 “Allaah sealed their hearts, hearing and sight with a veil.”<sup>56</sup>

- 56 Qataadah said that this verse means, “Satan controlled them when they obeyed him. Therefore, Allaah sealed their hearts, hearing and sight, and they could neither see guidance nor hear and understand.” Mujaahid said, “It occurs when sin resides in the heart and surrounds it from all sides, and this submersion of the heart in sin constitutes a stamp, meaning a seal.” (Ibn Abee Haatim, 1: 44) He also said, “The stain is not as bad as the stamp, which is not as bad as the lock which is the worst type.” (*Tafseer at-Tabaree*, 1: 259) Mujaahid demonstrated with his hand while saying, “They used to say that the heart is just like this – meaning the open palm. When the servant commits a sin, a part of the heart will be rolled up – and he rolled up his index finger. When the servant commits another sin, a part of the heart will be rolled up – and he rolled up another finger, until he rolled up all of his fingers. Then he said, “Then, the heart will be sealed.” Mujaahid also said that this the the description of the *raan* (in 83: 14). (*Tafseer at-Tabaree*, 1: 258) *Ibn Kathir*, vol. 1, pp. 121-2.

In *Tafseer al-Qurtube* (vol. 1, p. 187) the author said that the *Ummah* was of the unanimous opinion that Allaah described Himself as sealing and locking the hearts of disbelievers as a punishment for their disbelief. As Allaah said:

بَلْ خَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ

“Rather, Allaah has sealed them because of their disbelief.”

(*Soorah an-Nisaa*, 4: 155)

He also mentioned the *hadeeth* of Huthayfah in which he quoted Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

(( الْفِتْنُ فَقَالَ قَوْمٌ نَحْنُ سَمِعْنَاهُ فَقَالَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْنُونَ فِئْتَةُ الرَّجُلِ فِي أَهْلِهِ وَجَارِهِ قَالُوا أَجَلٌ قَالَ تَلَكَّ تَكْفُرُهَا الصَّلَاةُ وَالصِّيَامُ وَالصَّدَقَةُ وَلَكِنْ أَيُّكُمْ سَمِعَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَذْكُرُ الْفِتْنَ التِّي تَمُوجُ مَوْجَ الْبَحْرِ قَالَ حَدِيثُهَا فَاسْتَكْتَمَ الْقَوْمُ فَقُلْتُ أَنَا قَالَ أَنْتَ لِلَّهِ أَبُوكَ قَالَ حَدِيثُهَا سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ تَعْرَضُ الْفِتْنُ عَلَى الْقُلُوبِ كَالْحَصِيرِ عَوْدًا عَوْدًا فَإِيَّ قَلْبٍ أَشْرَبَهَا نَكَتَ فِيهِ نَكْتَةٌ سَوْدَاءٌ وَأَيُّ قَلْبٍ أَنْكَرَهَا نَكَتَ فِيهِ نَكْتَةٌ بَيْضَاءٌ حَتَّى تَصِيرَ عَلَى قَلْبَيْنِ عَلَى أَبْيَضٍ مِثْلِ الصَّفَا فَمَا تَضَرُّهُ فِئْتَةٌ مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَالْأَخْرُ أَسْوَدًا مَرْبَادًا كَالْكَوْزِ مَجْحِيًا لَا يَعْرِفُ مَعْرِوْفًا وَلَا يَنْكِرُ مِنْكَرًا إِلَّا مَا أَشْرَبَ مِنْ هَوَاءٍ ))

“Trial will be presented before the heart just as straws are woven into a mat, one after another. Any heart that accepts the trials will have a black spot engraved on it. And any heart that rejects the trials will have a white spot engraved on it. Hearts will be in two categories: white like barren rock. No trials will harm this category as long as the heavens and

(Soorah al-Baqarah, 2: 7)

And He said [the following] concerning the deeds and power is required of every one of these organs:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ  
بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا

**“I have created for hell many Jinns and humans who have hearts but do not understand with them, eyes but do not see**

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*earth exist. Another category black like a cup turned upside down. This heart doesn't recognize righteousness or renounce evil, but only what its desires feed on.” (Sahih Muslim, vol. 1, p. 86, no. 270). It is narrated on the authority of Aboo Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (may peace be upon him): Islaam began as something strange, and it will return to how it began, so (give) glad tidings for the strangers). [Quoted in *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 1, p. 122]*

Imaam al-Qurtubee raised this point in response to those who claimed that there was no free will since Allaah sealed hearts.

with them, and ears but do not hear with them<sup>57</sup>...<sup>58</sup>  
 (Soorah al-A'raaf, 7: 179)

- 57 Ibn Katheer said that this meant that they do not benefit from these senses that Allaah created for them as a means of gaining guidance... as He said about the hypocrites: “**They are deaf, dumb and blind so they do not return [to the right path],**” (2: 18), and about the disbelievers: “**They are deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand,**” (2: 171)
- 58 The completion of the verse:

أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَافِلُونَ

“They are like cattle, rather they are more astray.

These are those who are heedless.” (Soorah al-A'raaf, 2: 5)

Ibn Katheer said: “Those who neither hear the truth, nor understand it, nor see the guidance, are just like grazing cattle that do not benefit from these senses, except for what sustains their life in this world. Allaah said in a similar verse: “**And the example of those who disbelieve is that of one who shouts to those who hear nothing but the call and cries.**” (2: 171) meaning that their example, when they are called to the faith is the example of cattle that hear only the voice of their shepherd, but cannot understand what he is saying. Allaah further described them “**rather they are more astray,**” than cattle, because cattle still respond to the call of their shepherd, even though they do not understand what he is saying. As for the people described here they are unlike cattle, which fulfill the purpose and service for which they were created. The disbeliever was created to worship Allaah alone, but he disbelieved in Allaah and associated others in His worship. Therefore, those people who obey Allaah are more honorable than some angels, while cattle are better than those who disbelieve in Him.” (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, vol. 4, pp. 212-3)

## CHAPTER: *Prominence of the Heart*

**A**lthough all three are mentioned together, the eye is inferior to the heart and the ear. It is different from them in that it only sees things that are present and corporeal, like images and objects. On the other hand, the heart and ears enable one to know about spiritual and theoretical things that are invisible and intangible. Furthermore, even these two are different in that the heart understands things by itself and knowledge is its nourishment and specialty. As for the ear, it merely carries words containing knowledge to the heart. In itself it captures statements and words, and when they reach the heart, the heart extracts from them the knowledge they contain.<sup>59</sup>

The master of knowledge, in reality, is the heart. The remainder of the organs and limbs are gatemen to whom information reaches, which they were unable to acquire by themselves. [It is the master] to the degree that whoever loses any of the other organs, loses only the knowledge that was conveyed through it. Thus, the deaf person is unable to gain knowledge from speech, and the blind person is unaware of what vast knowledge objects contain.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, whoever looks at things or listens to the words of scholars, without the participation of the heart, does not understand anything. Thus, the pivot of affairs is the heart. Here the wisdom of the Almighty's statement becomes clear:

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا

**"Won't they travel in the land,<sup>61</sup> (and don't) they have hearts to understand or ears to hear with?"** (*Soorah al-Hajj*, 22: 46)

Sight is not mentioned here as in the previous verses because the context of the statement here is regarding unseen things,

59 Actually, this is the case for all the senses. All the five senses are sources of information that the mind-heart interprets and acts upon.

60 A blind person who feels the surface of a pyramid or a space shuttle cannot understand the history behind them by his sense of touch.

61 Travel and reflect on stories concerning the terrible end that befell those who denied the truth.

and the lessons to be understood from the final end of things, in which sight has no role. The same is the case in the Almighty's statement:

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنْ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ

“Or do you think that most of them hear and understand?”

(*Soorah al-Furqaan*, 25: 44)

And He further clarifies this reality in His statement:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

“In that is a reminder for whoever has a heart<sup>62</sup> or listens attentively.<sup>63</sup>” (*Soorah Qaaf*, 50: 37)

Those who have been granted wisdom and benefit from knowledge are on two levels:

1. Either a person who sees the truth by himself and accepts it and follows it, without needing anyone to invite him to it. That is one who truly possesses a heart.<sup>64</sup>

Or

2. A person, who does not understand [the truth] by himself, but needs someone to teach it to him, clarify it for him, advise him regarding it and mold him according to it. That is an attentive person who “...listens attentively”. That is one whose heart is present and not absent. As Mujaahid<sup>65</sup> said: “He was given knowledge and it was a

62 Ibn Katheer said that, “a heart” meant, “a sound understanding with which he comprehends, or a good mind, according to Mujaahid.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 9, p. 243)

63 “listens attentively” according to Ibn Katheer meant, “he hears the speech, comprehends and understands it in his mind and grasps its implications by his intellect.” (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 9, p. 243)

64 An example of this group can be found in the *hunafaa* who, like Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), rejected idol worship and the evil customs of Quraysh before the final prophethood began.

65 Mujaahid ibn Jabr (642-722 CE/40-103 AH), one of the leading students of Ibn ‘Abbaas who compiled the earliest known *tafseer*; however, no copy of his work has reached us. The significance of Mujaahid’s *tafseer* can be appreciated from his following statement, “I read the whole Qur’aan to Ibn ‘Abbaas three times. During each reading, I stopped at the end of every verse and asked him about whom and why it was revealed.” (Collected by Ibn Nu’aym in *Hilyah al-Awliyyaa*’ and by Ibn ‘Asaakir. See *Siyar al-A’laam*



reminder for him.”<sup>66</sup>

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ أَفَأَنْتَ تَسْمَعُ الصَّمَّ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَعْقِلُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْكَ  
أَفَأَنْتَ تَهْدِي الْغَمَى وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَبْصُرُونَ

The [following] statement of the Almighty then becomes clear:  
“Among them are those who listen to you. Will you then make the deaf hear, even if they do not understand? And among them are those who look at you. Will you then guide the blind even though they do not see?” (*Soorah Yoonus*, 10: 2)<sup>67</sup>

*an-Nubalaa'*, vol. 4, p. 450)

- 66 Literally the text said, “*alqaa as-sama'* gives ear”. Mujaahid said that it meant, “He does not talk to himself but listens with an attentive heart.” Ad-Dahhaak commented, “The Arabs would say that someone has “given ear” when he hears with his ears while his heart is present and not absent.” (At-Tabaree, vol. 22, p. 374 quoted in *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 4, p. 243)
- 67 Those who reject guidance are able to hear the message and see the messenger, however, they are unable to benefit from what they hear and see in a way similar to the deaf and the blind who can neither hear nor see. Ibn al-Qayyim identifies “*al-ismaa'*” (to cause one to hear) as one of the levels of guidance, by which Allaah guides His slave. He quoted Allaah's statement, “**The blind and the seeing are not equal, nor is darkness and light, nor is the shade and the sun's heat. And the living and dead are not the same. Indeed Allaah causes whom He wills to hear, but you cannot make those in their graves hear. You are only a warner.**” (*Soorah Faatir*, 35:19-22) He goes on to explain, “This type of hearing is more specific than merely hearing the proofs and evidences of the truth. This takes place for all (people), and the proof was established against (many of) them in this way. That is the hearing of the ears. But this (level of guidance) refers to the hearing of the heart. Speech is composed of words and meanings. So a portion of it goes to the ears, and a portion to the heart. Hearing the wording is by the ears, while hearing its true meaning and what is intended by it is the portion of the heart. So in these verses, Allaah negated this type of hearing from the desbelievers. But he confirmed that they possessed the hearing of the ears. He said, “**No admonition from their Lord comes to them as a recent revelation, except that they listen to it while they play, with their hearts occupied.**” (*Soorah al-Anbiyaa'*, 21: 2-3) This type of hearing does not benefit the listener, other than it being a case against him. But what is intended behind listening, its fruits and what it calls for, this does not happen to an occupied, heedless heart that turns away. (*Tahtheeb Madaarij as-Saalikeen*, vol. 1, p.)

And His statement:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا

“Among them are those who listen to you, but I have placed seals on their hearts so they do not understand and deafness in their ears.” (Soorah al-An‘aam, 6: 25)<sup>68</sup>

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68 Allaah attributes the sealing of their hearts and ears to Himself, as it is by His permission alone that they deliberately seal their own hearts and ears with their sins and deviation from the truth. If Allaah willed, He could have forced them to hear, understand, and act on their understanding, as He said:

وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا لَأَسْمَعَهُمْ وَلَوْ أَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ

“Had Allaah known any good in them, He would have surely made them hear; and even if He had made them hear, they would have turned away with aversion.” (Soorah al-Anfaal, 8: 23)

لَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَهْدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

“If Allaah wished He could have guided all the people.” (Soorah ar-Ra‘d, 13: 31)

## CHAPTER: *Right of the Heart*

If it is the right of the heart to know the truth, Allaah is the ultimate truth:

فَذَا كُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ الْحَقُّ فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالان

**“That is Allaah, your Lord, the Truth. So what is there beyond the truth but misguidance?”** (*Soorah Yoonus*, 10: 32)

Allaah is the Lord, author, creator, and beginner of every fleeting thought which occurs in the brain or crosses the mind. Whatever knowledge [the heart] comprehends is among the clear signs of Allaah in His earth and His sky.<sup>69</sup> The most truthful word said by a poet is that of Labeed<sup>70</sup>:

أَلَا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مَا خَلَا اللَّهَ بَاطِلٌ

69 Human discoveries are actually révelations from Allaah. Whatever true knowledge humans learn is what Allaah has shown them and permitted them to learn. False knowledge, like the theory of evolution, is from Satan. However, without Allaah's permission, even that cannot be learned.

70 Labeed ibn Rabe'e'ah was a pagan when he recited this line of poetry. He later accepted Islaam and is considered among the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). When 'Umar asked him about poetry he composed after accepting Islaam and he replied: '*Soorah al-Baqarah* has replaced my poetry.' He settled in Kufah and died there during the caliphate of 'Uthmaan at the age of 150. (*Fat'hul-Baaree*, vol. 7, p. 193, no. 3841).

'Umar ibn al-Khattaab used to encourage the narration of Labeed's Ode containing the verses:

إِنْ تَقْوَى رَبَّنَا خَيْرٌ نَفْلًا • وَيَا ذنِ اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَعَجَلٌ

أَحْمَدُ اللَّهَ فَلَا نَدُّ لَهُ • بِيَدِيهِ الْخَيْرُ مَا شَاءَ فَعَلُ

مَنْ هَدَاهُ سَبِيلَ الْخَيْرِ إِهْتَدَى • نَاعِمَ الْبَالِ وَمَنْ شَاءَ أَضَلُّ

Indeed fear of our Lord is the best booty \* By Allaah's permission is my taking time and haste

I praise Allaah for He has no equal \* All good is in His hand and what He wishes He does

Whoever He guides to the paths of good is guided \* and at ease and whomever He wishes He misguides

(Narrated from az-Zuhree in *Hilyatul-Awliyaa*, quoted in *Fat'hul-Baaree*, Baab al-Mashee'ah wal Iraadah)

“Indeed, everything else besides Allaah is false...”<sup>71</sup>

That is, everything looked at from the perspective of itself is headed towards non-existence and in need of the Ever-living, the Eternal.<sup>72</sup> If you looked at [anything] which the Hand of Care has taken charge of, according to the destiny of **He who gave every thing its form then guided it**<sup>73</sup>, you would see it existing

- 71 Shaykhul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah quoted the text of an *hadeeth* to illustrate his point that Allaah is the ultimate truth that needs to be known above all else. The full text is as follows:

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال النبي ﷺ: (( أصدق كلمة قالها الشاعر كلمة لبيد ألا كل شيء ما خلا الله باطل وكاد أمية بن أبي الصلت أن يسلم ))

Aboo Hurayrah quoted the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying: “The most truthful word spoken by a poet was the word of Labeed: Indeed everything else besides Allaah is false. Umayyah ibn Abis-Salt almost accepted Islaam.” (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 8, p. 108, no. 168, *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1220, no. 5605. See footnote 83, p. for details about Umayyah ibn Abis-Salt)

The second half of Labeed’s couplet of poetry is

وكل نعيم لا محالة زائل

“And every pleasure without exception will end.”

In Makkah when the Quraysh were at their worst in inflicting suffering on Muslims, ‘Uthmaan ibn Maz’oon had just returned from the first Hijrah [to Abyssinia] and entered Makkah under the protection of al-Waleed ibn al-Mugheerah. When he saw the extent to which the pagans were harming Muslims and he remained safe, he relieved al-Waleed of his protection. While he was in a gathering of Qurayshite leaders, Labeed came to them, sat down, and began to recite some of his poetry. When Labeed recited, “Indeed, everything else besides Allaah is false,” ‘Uthmaan ibn Maz’oon said: “You have spoken the truth.” But when he recited, “And every pleasure, without exception, will end,” ‘Uthmaan said: “You have lied. The pleasures of paradise do not end.” Labeed then said: “Since when do you harm those who sit with you, O people of Quraysh?” A man got up and slapped ‘Uthmaan and his eye became green. Al-Waleed then chided him for relinquishing his protection saying: “You were in the protection.” He replied: “My other eye is in need of what befell the first.” Al-Waleed told him: “Come back to my protection.” He replied: “I rather prefer the protection of Allaah, Most High.” (*Seerah Ibn Is’haaq*, quoted in *Fat’hul-Baaree*, vol. 7, p. 193) Ibn Hajar explained that if the term “*baatil*” is taken to mean *haalik* (perish), then the pleasures of paradise are included. And everything besides Allaah can perish even if Allaah creates for it eternity afterwards.

- 72 All things besides Allaah were brought into existence from a state of non-existence by Allaah and they are all headed back to that state.
- 73 Ibn Taymiyyah has included a portion of a verse in his explanation of Allaah’s mercy manifest in His creation and guidance of human beings. The

and clothed with garments of grace and kindness.<sup>74</sup>

It then becomes clear that the heart was only created for the remembrance of Allaah, may He be glorified.<sup>75</sup> As a result of that, a

verse is as follows:

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى

**“He said: Our Lord is He who gave everything its form then guided it.”** (Soorah Taahaa, 20: 50).

74 The favors which Allaah has granted human beings are countless, as Allaah Himself says:

وَإِنْ تَعَدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا

**“If you were to count Allaah’s blessings you would not be able to calculate them.”**

(Soorah Ibraaheem, 14: 34 and Soorah an-Nahl, 16: 18)

Allaah’s favors cover, not only this world, but also the next as no one will enter paradise merely based on his or her deeds.

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ زَوْجِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ أَنَّهَا كَانَتْ تَقُولُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: (( سَدُّوا وَقَارِبُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا فَإِنَّهُ لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ أَحَدًا عَمَلُهُ قَالُوا وَلَا أَنْتَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ وَلَا أَنَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَتَغَمَّدَنِي اللَّهُ مِنْهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ وَعِلْمًا أَوْ أَحَبَّ الْعَمَلِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَدْوَمُهُ وَإِنْ قُلَّ ))

‘Aa’ishah, used to relate that the Prophet of Allaah (ﷺ) would say: “Observe moderation, but if you fail, try to do as much as you can moderately, and be happy. For, none will enter paradise only because of his deeds.” The [Companions] asked, “O Messenger of Allaah! Not even you?” He replied, “Not even I, were it not that Allaah envelop me in His mercy, [grace and forgiveness]. And bear in mind that the deed most loved by Allaah is one done constantly, even though it is small.” (Sahih Muslim, vol. 4, pp. 1473-4, no. 6770, and Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 8, p. 314, no. 471)

75 Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) stressed the importance of remembrance of Allaah and knowledge in the following narration:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ يَقُولُ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: (( أَلَا إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا مَلْعُونَةٌ مَلْعُونَةٌ مَا فِيهَا إِلَّا ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ وَمَا وَالَاهُ وَعَالَمٌ أَوْ مُتَعَلِّمٌ ))

Aboo Hurayrah quoted the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) as saying: “Indeed, this world and its contents are cursed except the remembrance of Allaah, what helps to remember Allaah, the scholar and the student.” (Sunan Ibn-i-Majah, vol. 5, p. 413-4, no. 4112 and authenticated in Saheeh al-Jaami’ as-Sagheer, vol. 1, pp. 641-2, no. 3414)

He (ﷺ) also said, “Shall I inform you of the best of your deeds, the one that raises you most in rank, most purifying in the sight of your Lord, which is better for you than giving gold and silver, and better for you than meeting your enemy and striking their necks and them striking your necks?” They said, “Certainly, [tell us].” He said, “It is the remembrance of Allaah, the Exalted.” (Recorded by Ahmad, at-Tirmitheh, Ibn Maajah, and Maalik and authenticated by al-Albaanee in Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh, vol. 2, p. 702).

Syrian sage of the past – I believe it was Sulaymaan al-Khawaas<sup>76</sup> – may Allaah have mercy on him – said: “Remembrance [of God] in relationship to the heart is like nourishment relative to the body.”<sup>77</sup> Thus, as the body cannot find pleasure in food when it is sick, likewise the heart cannot find the sweetness of

76 Sulaymaan al-Khawaas was among the leading aesthetics of Syria and a contemporary of Ibraaheem ibn Adham. (Ibn Hibbaan in *Ath-Thiqaat*, vol. 8, p. 277, no. 13430) He used to attend the classes of Imaam al-Awzaa’ee (708-774 CE) in Lebanon. On one occasion Sa’eed ibn ‘Abdul-‘Azeez attended a class of al-Awzaa’ee’s in which he mentioned the aesthetics (*zuhhaad*) and said: “We need to be like these people.” Without realizing that Sulaymaan al-Khawaas was present, Sa’eed commented, “I have not seen anyone more aesthetic than Sulaymaan al-Khawaas.” Sulaymaan covered his face with his turban, and got up and left. Al-Awzaa’ee then went to Sa’eed and said: “Woe be on you. Don’t you think about what comes out of your head? You have harmed one of our attendees by praising him to his face.” (*Siyar A’laam an-Nubalaa*, vol. 8, p. 179). Sa’eed later visited Sulaymaan in his house in Beirut at night and found him in darkness. When he asked him why, Sulaymaan replied that the grave would be darker. When Sa’eed asked him why he was alone in the house without any companion, he replied that he disliked having a companion who he was unable to serve. So Sa’eed offered him some dirhams, but he refused saying that whatever little he had was a result of great effort and he disliked making himself get used to easy money. (*Hilyatul-Awliyyaa*, vol. 8, p. 277)

77 Which type of remembrance is a true nourishment for the heart? People often think of *thikr* (remembrance of Allaah) in the very narrow sense: repeating certain prescribed statements of remembrance. However, *thikr* is in fact the heart’s remembrance and consciousness of Allaah which should accompany every believer’s actions and statements. Sa’eed ibn Jubayr said, “*Thikr* is obedience to Allaah. Whoever obeys Allaah has in fact remembered Him. Whoever does not obey Him is not one who remembers Him, even if He says tasbeeh, and recites the Book a lot.” (*Sharh as-Sunnah*, al-Baghawee, vol. 5, p. 10) [SEE MY PRINCIPLE 1 NOTES FOR REFERENCE. UE) Ibn Taymiyyah also stated in his *Majmoo’ al-n*, “Every statement made by the tongue and conceived by the heart which takes one closer to Allaah, including learning knowledge, teaching it, commanding good and forbidding evil, is a form of *thikr* of Allaah.” (vol. 10, p. 661)

This mindfulness of Allaah is the nourishment of the heart, while the formal form of *thikr* – wherein a person remembers Allaah with specific words at specific times, as defined by the sunnah – aids and develops the true remembrance of the heart.

Furthermore, since *thikr* is the heart’s nourishment, a heart which lacks it is a dead heart. Hence, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*The similitude of the one who remembers his Lord and the one who does not remember his Lord is like the similitude of death and life.*” (Bukhari and Muslim)

remembrance [of God] when it is in love the material world,<sup>78</sup> or something to that effect.

If the heart is busy with [the remembrance of] Allaah, aware of the truth, and reflecting on knowledge, it is in its [correct] location, just as the eye when used to look at things is in its [correct] location.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, if it is not used for knowledge and it is unaware of the truth, it forgets its Lord and is not in its location. Rather, it is lost.<sup>80</sup> It is not necessary for

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78 When one is attached to this world, its pleasures and pursuits, this attachment occupies a great portion of the heart, which was created to be attached to Allaah. Hence, it distracts the person from the higher goals of attaining closeness to Allaah, righteousness, and Paradise. This is why Allaah warns us, saying, **“O you who believe! Do not let your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allaah. And those who do so will be the losers.”** (Soorah al-Munaafiqoon, 63:9) Allaah also said, **“The mural competition for piling up (the good things of this world) diverts you (from the more serious things), until you visit the graves.”** (Soorah at-Takaathur, 102:1-2) Though Muslims are certain of the fact that the world will perish, most of them have not internalised this reality and its implications in their hearts. They are instead preoccupied with their worldly desires and goals, not realizing the insignificance of this world. The Prophet (ﷺ) once passed by a dead goat which had either very small ears or mutilated ears. The Prophet took it and asked his companions, *“Which of you would like to have this for one dirham?”* They said, *“We don’t want it. What would we use it for?”* He said, *“Would you like to have it for [free]?”* They replied, *“By Allaah, even if it were alive, we would find it defective, since it has small ears. What do you think now that it’s dead?”* Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) then told them, *“By Allaah, the world is more insignificant to Allaah than this [dead goat] is to you.”* (Muslim). Realizing this would help us implement the Prophet’s (ﷺ) statement, *“Be in this world like a traveller or a wayfarer.”*

Furthermore, regardless of one’s efforts seeking the pleasures of this world, these efforts do not ensure that they will attain what they seek. As a matter of fact, the one who detaches himself from the pleasures of this life will be rewarded with the dunyaa, as well as inner contentment and ease in his affairs. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, *“Whoever makes this world his (main) goal, then Allaah will scatter his affairs for him, He will place poverty before his very eyes, and nothing will come to him of this world except that which was already written for him. But whoever makes the Hereafter his goal, then Allaah will gather his affairs for him, He will place richness in his heart, and the world will come to him conquered and submissive.”*

79 By “correct location” the author means that it is being utilized as it was meant to be utilized. That is, that it is not being misused.

80 The limbs and organs will bear witness against their owners on the Day of

me to say that it was not put in its “correct” location, as it was not put [anywhere] at all. Certainly its [correct] location is the truth and everything besides the truth is false.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, if it is not located in the truth there is nothing left for it but falsehood. Furthermore, falsehood is not fundamentally “a thing”<sup>82</sup> and

Judgment.

شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“Their ears, their eyes and their skins will testify against them about what they did.” (Soorah Fussilat, 41: 20)

- 81 When the truth is abandoned, all that remains is falsehood and misguidance as Allaah states in a variety of ways in the Qur’aan:

فَذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ فَمَاذَا بَعَدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالُ

“That is Allaah, your Lord, the Truth, and what is there after the truth except error.” (Soorah Yoonus, 10: 32)

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنْ مَا يُدْعَوْنَ مِنْ دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ

“That is because Allaah is the Truth and whatever they call on besides Him is falsehood.” (Soorah al-Hajj, 22: 62) See also Soorah Luqmaan, 31: 30.

- 82 Ibn Taymiyyah here alludes to a philosophical argument concerning evil and whether it should be included in Allaah’s creation since Allaah said that He created everything.

اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

“Allaah is the creator of every thing.” (Soorah az-Zumar, 10: 32)

Is evil itself something a “thing” and therefore existent or is it merely the absence of good? Non-existence is not itself a “thing” but the absence of something. Similarly, if falsehood is the absence of truth, falsehood must also not be a “thing”.

‘Alee ibn Abee Taaalib related that in the opening supplication of the Tahajjud prayer Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) used to say:

(( لَبَّيْكَ وَسَعْدَيْكَ وَالْخَيْرُ كُلُّهُ هِيَ يَدَيْكَ وَالشَّرُّ لَيْسَ إِلَيْكَ ))

“...I hear Your call and am following Your religion, and all good is in Your two hands and the evil is not attributable to You...” (Sahih Muslim, vol. 1, pp. 373, no. 1695)

Ibn Taymiyyah discussed the attribution of evil to Allaah at length in many of his works. In his compendium of rulings in which he said, after quoting the above *hadeeth*: “[Evil is not attributable to Allaah], because evil either exists or does not exist. Non-existent [evil], whether it is itself non-existent or [is non-existent due to] the absence of one of its characteristics of completeness, the absence of its acts, like the absence of life, knowledge, hearing, sight, speech, intelligence, or the absence of righteous deeds in their various forms, like knowledge of Allaah, loving Him, worshipping Him, trusting in Him, repenting to Him, having hope in Him, fearing Him, adhering to His commands and avoiding His prohibitions, and [the absence



what is not "a thing" is not suitable as a location.

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of] other existing matters, whether evident or hidden statements and deeds. For, all of these matters are good and righteous deeds and their absence is evil and sins. But this non-existence is not a thing, in the first place, which would then need a creator and a cause and thus be attributable to Allaah... Who created every thing ... Non-existent matters are sometimes a result of the absence of a cause and sometimes a result of the existence of an inhibitor. Consequently, the evils that possess characteristics of non-existence are not attributable to Him from both aspects." (*Majmoo' Fataawaa*, vol. 14, p. 16)

Ibn al-Qayyim said the following concerning evil and non-existence: "The reality of the human soul is that it is ignorant, oppressive, poor and needy. The evil that happens to it is of two types: non-existent and existent. The first is like the absence of knowledge, faith, patience, desiring righteous deeds, and lack of good deeds. This non-existence does not have a cause [to bring it into existence], in the same way that absolute non-existence does not have a cause, because causes only have an effect on existing things. Likewise, its lack of preparation for good things, and recommended good, is absolute non-existence which does not have a cause because non-existence is fundamentally not a thing and what is not a thing cannot be said to have been caused [to exist] by a cause. Consequently, it cannot be said to be from Allaah. Only existent matters are in need of a cause. As a result, all Muslims say: "Whatever Allaah wills exists, and what He does not will does not exist." Every existing thing [exists] by the will of Allaah, and whatever does not exist is according to His will. Non-existence is explained by the non-existence of a cause, a [necessary] condition, or the existence of an inhibitor. It may also be said that *the cause of [something's] non-existence is the non-existence of a cause* [to bring it into existence] (*'illatul 'adam 'adamul-'illah*)... Thus, it is clear that this type of evil [resulting from the non-existence of good] cannot possibly be attributed to Allaah.

As for the second form of evil, existing evil, like false beliefs, and corrupt desires, it is the necessary consequence of the non-existence [of good]. For, whenever beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds from the soul are absent, they are automatically followed by evil and ignorance and what they necessitate. This must be [the case], because the soul must be in one of two opposite [states]: If it is not busy with beneficial and righteous [deeds], it will be busy doing harmful and corrupt [deeds]. This existing evil is from the creation of the Almighty, as there is no creator besides Him and **He is the Creator of everything** (*Soorah az-Zumar*, 39: 62). However, there must be a good purpose for everything that Allaah, the Almighty, created. If He did not create it, that good purpose would be lost, and it is not wise to let that good purpose pass which is more beloved to Him, may He be glorified, than the resultant good in its non-existence. For, in its existence there will result effects and outcomes which are much more praiseworthy to the Almighty than [what results from] its non-existence" (*Tareeq al-Hijratayn*, vol. 1, p. 176-7)

The heart itself does not accept anything but the truth. So if [what is contrary to the truth] is put in it, [the heart] will not accept what it was not created for it. [That is] **the way (sunnah) of Allaah and you will never find change in Allaah's way (sunnah).**<sup>83</sup> In spite of that,<sup>84</sup> [the heart] is never left on its own unattended, for it will always remain in the valleys of thoughts and the realms of aspirations. It will never be in the state of emptiness and abandonment like that of the eyes and ears.<sup>85</sup> It may be put in the wrong location, neither set free or suspended,<sup>86</sup> where it [in fact] has no location.

It is amazing – May our Lord be glorified, the Almighty, the All-Wise, that this state only becomes manifest to a person when he returns to the truth, either in this life when he repents or when he ends up in the next life. He will see the vileness of the state in which he was and just how far his heart was astray from the truth, if it was used in falsehood.

On the other hand, if [the heart] is left in the state in which it was created, void of any reflection and empty of any thought, it would accept knowledge, free from ignorance, and see the clear truth, then believe in its Lord and turn to Him in repentance. For every child is born in the natural state [of belief],<sup>87</sup> but his

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83 The author here uses parts of a verse to affirm his view that hearts cannot accept falsehood because they were not created to accept it. The complete verse is as follows:

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا

**“The way (sunnah) of Allaah which occurred before. And you will never find any change in the way of Allaah.”** (Soorah al-Fat’h, 48: 23) See also (Soorah al-Ahzaab, 33: 62)

84 Even if the heart is put in the wrong location.

85 When the eyes and ears do not work as they should, there exists a vacuum in which no information is transferred. Even in sleep, the mind continues to operate in the dream state while the eyes and ears are virtually shut down and unable to process any information.

86 The terms used by Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah to describe the heart's state of being in limbo are those used to describe a woman who is neither divorced (*mutallaq*) nor held undivorced (*mu'allaq*).

87 The origin of this natural state of belief in Allaah is Aadam's covenant in pre-creation. The Prophet (ﷺ) related that when Allaah created Aadam, He took a covenant from him in a place called Na'maan on the day of 'Arafah [The 9th of the 12th lunar month known as Thul-Hijjah]. Then He extracted from him all of his descendants who would be born until the end of the

parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Zoroastrian, just an animal gives birth to a whole animal. You will not find on it

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world, generation after generation, and spread them out in front of Him in order to take a covenant from them also. He spoke to them face to face saying: "Am I not your Lord?" and they all replied, "Yes, we testify to it." Allaah then explained why He had all of mankind bear witness that He was their creator and only true God worthy of worship. He said, "That was in case you (mankind) should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Surely we were unaware of all this. We had no idea that You, Allaah, were our God. No one told us that we were supposed to worship You alone." Allaah went on to explain that it was also in case some people would say: "It was our ancestors who made partners (with Allaah) and we are only their descendants; will You, then destroy us for what those liars did?" (Collected by Ahmad and authenticated in *Silsilah al-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah*, vol. 4, p. 158, no. 1623.) This was the Prophet's explanation of the Qur'aanic verse in which Allaah said:

{ وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ (172) أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ }

"When your Lord drew forth from the loins of the children of Aadam their descendant and made them testify concerning themselves, [saying]: 'Am I not your Lord?' they said, 'Yes, we testify to it.' [This] in case you say should say on the Day of Judgement, 'We were unaware of this.' Or in case you should say, 'It was our ancestors who made partners [with Allaah] and we are only their descendants. Will you then destroy us for what those liars did?'" (Soorah al-A'raaf, 7: 172-3)

The verse and prophetic explanation confirm the fact that everyone is responsible for belief in God and on the Day of Judgement. Every human being has the belief in God imprinted on his soul and Allaah shows every idolator, during the course of his life, signs that his idol is not God. Hence, every sane human being is required to believe in One God who is without partners. However, Allaah through His mercy and grace, accepts the excuses of those to whom a messenger did not bring the message along with those incapable of comprehending the message due to destined physical inabilities.

Anas, Aboo Sa'eed al-Khudree, and Mu'aath ibn Jabal quoted Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying,

any disfiguration.<sup>88</sup> [This is] Allaah's way in which He created people. There will be no change in Allaah's creation. That is the correct religion.<sup>89</sup> However, in most situations, the soul becomes occupied with the temptations of this world and its bodily needs, so its desires block the heart from the truth.<sup>90</sup> In

(( يُوْتَى بِأَرْبَعَةٍ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ: بِالْمَوْلُودِ، وَبِالْمَعْتُودِ، وَبِمَنْ مَاتَ فِي الْفِتْرَةِ، وَالشُّبْحِ الْفَاقِي، كُلُّهُمْ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِحُجَّتِهِ، فَيَقُولُ الرَّبُّ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى لِعُنُقٍ مِنَ النَّارِ: أَبْرَزْ، فَيَقُولُ لَهُمْ: إِنِّي كُنْتُ أُنْعَثُ إِلَى عِبَادِي رَسُولًا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ، وَإِنِّي رَسُولُ نَفْسِي إِلَيْكُمْ، أَدْخَلُوا هُنَا، فَيَقُولُ مَنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ الشَّقَاءُ: يَا رَبِّ! أَيْنَ نَدْخَلُهَا وَمِنْهَا كُنَّا نَفِرُّ؟ قَالَ: وَمَنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ السَّعَادَةُ يَمْضِي فَيَقْتَحِمُ فِيهَا مُسْرِعًا، قَالَ: فَيَقُولُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى: أَنْتُمْ لِرُسُلِي أَشَدُّ تَكْذِيبًا وَمَعْصِيَةً، فَيَدْخُلُ هَؤُلَاءِ الْجَنَّةَ، وَهَؤُلَاءِ النَّارَ ))

*"Four [groups of people] will be brought [before Allaah] on the Day of Resurrection: the newly born, the mentally insane, those who died in the period between two messengers, and the senile. Each will present his case. Then the Lord will tell a flame from the Hellfire to come out. He will then say, 'I used to send to My slaves messengers from among themselves. Today I am My own messenger to you. So enter this fire.' Those destined for Hell will say, 'Our Lord, how can we enter it when we were supposed to escape from it?' Then the ones destined to be happy will rush forth and jump into it without hesitation. Allaah will say to those who refused, 'You would have been even more disbelieving and disobedient to My messengers.' Then He put the second group [i.e. those who obeyed Allaah and jumped in] in Paradise, and the first group in the Hellfire."* (Collected by Aboo Ya'laa and al-Bazzaar and authenticated in *Silsilah al-Ahadeeth as-Saheehah*, vol. 5, p. 603, no. 2468.)

- 88 The author here refers to the *hadeeth* of Aboo Hurayrah in which he quoted the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying:

(( كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُولَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ فَأَبَوَاهُ يَهُودَانِهِ أَوْ يَنْصَرَانِهِ أَوْ يَمَجْسَانِهِ كَمَا كُنْتُ الْبَيْهَمَةَ تَتَّبِعُ الْبَيْهَمَةَ هَلْ تَرَى فِيهَا جَدَاءً ))

"Every child is born in the natural state [of belief], but his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Zoroastrian, just an animal gives birth to a whole animal. Do you see on it any disfiguration?" (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 8, pp. 389-390, no. 597 and Sahih Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1398, no. 6423)

- 89 Ibn Taymiyyah quotes a Qur'aanic verse in support of the concept of the natural state in which human beings are created.

فَطَرَتِ اللَّهُ التِّي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لِاتَّبَعِدَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينَ الْقِيمُ

"[Adhere to] the natural way of Allaah in which He created people. There should be no change in Allaah's creation. That is the correct religion." (Soorah ar-Room, 30: 30)

- 90 Ibn al-Qayyim explains that desires lead to one's wants and goals being distorted or ruined. His goals and wants become things which are not

this state it is like an eye staring at the ground. In that state, it is impossible for it to see the crescent moon, or even to glance towards it.<sup>91</sup> Or he could be inclined towards [the truth], but [desires and material needs] block [the heart] from following the truth and it becomes like an eye that has a floating impurity in it which prevents it from seeing things.

Whims and desires can intervene before [the heart] learns the truth and block it from reflection on it. Thus, the truth will not become clear, as was said:

حُبُّكَ الشَّيْءِ يَعْمي وَيَصِمُّ

“Your love of something blinds and deafens.”<sup>92</sup>

beneficial (Ighaathat al-Lahfaan min Masaayid ash-Shaytaan, p. 15). This causes a person to overindulge in this worldly life because he lacks certainty concerning the realities of the Hereafter. A dangerous thing about desires is that it can affect a person after he has gained knowledge, a state usually more difficult to cure than ignorance. Furthermore, desires are of so many varieties, that a person must strive to control all of them. There are sexual lusts, desire for power or prestige, desire to be praised or admired due to beauty, wealth, status, and even piety or knowledge, etc. A person can become enslaved to his desires, such that he sees the truth according to them. Al-Qurtubee quoted Ibn Mas'ood as saying, “You are living in a time in which desires are controlled by the truth. [However,] there will come a time in which the truth will be moulded by desires. We seek refuge with Allaah from that time.” (vol. 19, p. 208). In his essay of worship, Ibn Taymiyyah also stated, regarding one enslaved to his desires, “If one attains (what he desires), he is pleased and if he is unable to attain it, he becomes discontented. Such a person is a slave (*abd*) to the things he desires. He is a slave of it, since true slavery and servitude are the enslavement and servitude of the heart.” (Ibn Taymiyyah's Essay on Worship, pp. 100-101). Allaah expresses this many times throughout the Qur'aan. For example, He said, “Have you seen the one who takes his desires as his god?” (al-Jaathiyah 45: 23).

91 This statement is taken from the following Qur'aanic parable:

أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَىٰ أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

“Is one who walks with his face facing the ground more guided or one who walks upright on a straight path?” (Soorah al-Mulk, 67: 22)

92 Shaykh Saleem al-Hilaalee praised Ibn Taymiyyah's mention of this narration as a proverb since, as he explained, it has been inaccurately attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) by way of Abud-Dardaa in al-Bukhaaree's *Tareekh al-Kabeer*, vol. 2, p. 1, no. 175 and in *Sunan Abee Daawood*, (513) as well as *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 5, p. 194 and vol. 6, p. 650. He ruled its *sanad* as inauthentic due to the presence of Aboo Bakr ibn Abee Maryam who mixed up narrations due to senility on top of his poor memory. (*Risaalah*

So [the heart] will remain in dark thoughts. This is often due to pride that prevents it from seeking the truth:

فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مُنْكَرَةٌ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ

Those who do not believe in the Hereafter, their hearts reject it<sup>93</sup> and they are arrogant.<sup>94</sup>

(Soorah an-Nahl, 16: 22)

Whims and desires could also oppose [the heart] after it became acquainted with the truth causing it to deny [the truth] and turn away from it, as our Lord – may He be glorified – said regarding them:

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ آيَاتِيَ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلِمَةً لَا يُؤْمِنُوهَا

وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الْعِزِّ يُعْتَدُوهُ سَبِيلًا

“I will turn away from My signs those who behave arrogant in

fee al-Qalb, footnote 3, pp. 23-4)

عَنْ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ: (( حُبُّكَ الشَّيْءَ يُغْمِيهِ وَيَنْصِمُ ))

Abud-Dardaa reported the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying: “Your love for something blinds and deafens.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, vol. 3, p. 1421, no. 5111)

The equivalent phrase in English is “love blinds”. A person in love is often unable to see the faults of the one whom he or she loves. Which is why Islaam requires a guardian (*walee*) for Muslim women for marriage as the consequences for women are much more grave than for women. It is also why Muslim parents are generally opposed to “love” marriages, though Islaam encourages couples to see each other prior to marriage in order to develop positive feelings. The principle of blinding love applies to anything human beings become infatuated with or addicted to.

- 93 The beginning of the verse states: “**Your god is one God...**” Ibn Katheer commented on this verse saying: “[Allaah] tells us that the hearts of the disbelievers deny that and are astonished by that [saying]:

أَجْعَلُ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ

Has he made the gods [all] into one God? That is indeed strange.”

(Soorah Saad, 38: 5)

وَإِذَا ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَأَزَّتْ قُلُوبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ

“And when Allaah alone is mentioned, their hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter are filled with disgust.” (Soorah az-Zumar, 39: 45)” (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, vol. 5, p. 446)

- 94 Ibn Katheer went on to say: “Meaning they are too proud to worship Allaah, and their hearts reject the idea of singling Him out, as Allaah says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ

“Indeed, those who scorn worshipping Me, will enter Hell in humiliation.” (Soorah al-Mumtahanah, 40: 60)” (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, vol. 5, p. 447)

the land, without right.<sup>95</sup> So if they see every sign they will not believe in them. And if they see the path of guidance they will not take it, but if they see the path of error they will take it as a way<sup>96</sup>.”<sup>97</sup> (Soorah al-A'raaf, 7: 146)

- 95 Ibn Katheer commented that Allaah said: “I will deprive the hearts of those who are too proud to obey Me, and arrogant with people without right, from understanding the signs and proofs that testify to My Might, Law and Commandments.” And just as they acted arrogantly without justification, Allaah has disgraced them with ignorance. Allaah said in another verse:

وَتَقَلَّبُ أَعْيُنَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ

“I will turn their hearts and eyes away [from guidance], as they did not believe in it the first time.” (Soorah al-An'aam, 6: 110)

فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ

**“When they turned away, Allaah turned their hearts away.”** (Soorah as-Saff, 61: 5) (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, vol. 4, p. 161)

- 96 According to Ibn Katheer, this meant that “even if the way of guidance and safety appears before them, they will not take it, but if the way that leads to destruction and misguidance appears to them, they adopt that way. And Allaah explains why they do this [in the remainder of the verse]:

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ

“That is because they rejected My signs’ in their hearts ‘and were heedless of them,’ gaining no lessons from the signs.” (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, vol. 4, p. 162)

- 97 A classic example of this principle from the era of the Prophet (ﷺ) is that of Umayyah ibn Abis-Salt about whom the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال النبي ﷺ: (( كَادَ أُمَّيَّةُ بْنُ أَبِي الصَّلْتِ أَنْ يَسْلِمَ )).

Aboo Hurayrah quoted the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying: “Umayyah ibn Abis-Salt almost accepted Islaam.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 8, p. 108, no. 168, Sahih Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1220, no. 5605)

Umayyah was from the Thaqeef tribe of Taif, and was among those who searched for [the true] religion and read the Scriptures. It is said that he was among those who converted to Christianity. He frequently mentioned *Tawheed* and the Day of Resurrection in his poems. From his research [in the Scriptures] he informed Aboo Sufyaan that the time for a prophet to appear among the Arabs had come and he hoped that it would be himself. However, his research showed that [the prophet] would be from the descendents of ‘Abd Manaaf. Soon afterwards, Muhammad (ﷺ) appeared and Umayyah informed Aboo Sufyaan that it was him. When Aboo Sufyaan asked: “Shouldn’t we follow him?” He replied: “I feel shy before the young women of Thaqeef, because I used to tell them that I was going to be the one. Could I then become a follower of a boy from ‘Abd Manaaf?” (At-Tabaraanee) Ibn Mandah narrated from Ibn ‘Abbaas that al-Faari’ah bint Abis-Salt, the sister of Umayyah later came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and recited

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some of Umayyah's poetry and he said: "*His poetry believed but his heart disbelieved.*" [Shareed said: One day when I rode behind Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) on the same animal, he asked me: "*Do you remember any of Umayyah ibn Abis-Salt's poetry?*" I replied: Yes. He said: "*Go on then.*" So I recited a couplet and he said: "*Carry on.*" So I recited another couplet and he said: "*Some more,*" until I recited one hundred couplets. He commented: "*He was almost a Muslim in his poetry.*" (*Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1220, nos. 5062-3)] He lived until the Battle of Badr and composed poetry for those of the pagans who died during it. Umayyah died after that, a pagan till the end, in the 9<sup>th</sup> year AH. Abul-Faraj al-Aṣfahaanee reported his last words on his deathbed were: "I know that the *ḥanafiyyah* is correct. But doubt preoccupied me concerning Muhammad." (*Fat'hul-Baaree*, vol. , p. , no. )



## CHAPTER: *The Heart Container*

**T**he heart relative to knowledge is like a cup relative to water, a jar relative to honey, or a valley relative to a flood, as the Almighty said:

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا

“He sent down rain from the sky and [water flowed in] the valleys according to their capacities...”<sup>98</sup> (Soorah ar-Ra'd, 13: 17)

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

(( مَثَلُ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْعِلْمِ كَمَثَلِ الْغَيْثِ الْكَثِيرِ أَصَابَ أَرْضًا فَكَانَ مِنْهَا نَقِيَّةٌ قَبِلَتْ الْمَاءَ فَأَنْبَتَتِ الْكَلَأَ وَالغُضْبَ الْكَثِيرَ وَكَانَتْ مِنْهَا أَجَادِبٌ أَمْسَكَتِ الْمَاءَ فَنَفَعَ اللَّهُ بِهَا النَّاسَ فَشَرِبُوا وَسَقَوْا وَرَزَعُوا وَأَصَابَتْ مِنْهَا بَخَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى إِنَّمَا هِيَ قَيْحَانٌ لَا تُمْسِكُ مَاءً وَلَا تَنْبِتُ كَلًّا فَذَلِكَ مَثَلُ مَنْ فَقَهُ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ وَنَفَعَهُ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ فَعَلِمَ وَعَلِمَ وَمَثَلُ مَنْ لَمْ يَرْفَعْ بِذَلِكَ رَأْسًا وَلَمْ يَقْبَلْ هُدَى اللَّهِ الَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ ))

“The example of guidance and knowledge with which Allaah has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was fertile soil

98 The remainder of this part of the verse is as follows:

فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا

“...but the flood bears away the rising foam.”

According to Ibn Katheer, “This noble verse contains two parables which affirm that truth remains and increases, while falsehood diminishes and perishes. Allaah said He sends rain and each valley takes its share according to its capacity, for some valleys are wider and can retain more water than others which are small and thus retain smaller amounts of water. This verse indicates that hearts differ, for some of them can retain substantial knowledge while others cannot entertain knowledge, but rather are bothered by knowledge...

‘Alee ibn Abee Talhah reported that ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Abbaas commented on this verses saying: “Allaah has turned this [natural event] into a parable. Hearts carry knowledge from Him, and [levels of] certainty according to the amount of doubts. As for the doubts, doing good deeds does not benefit while they exists. On the other hand, Allaah benefits the people of certainty by it, hence Allaah’s statement: “**Then, as for the foam,**” which refers to doubt, **‘it passes away as scum on the river banks, while that which is for the good of humankind remains in the earth,**’ in reference to certainty.” (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, vol. 5, pp. 259-261)

that absorbed the rain water and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance. And another portion of it was hard and held the rainwater. Allaah benefited people with it and they utilized it for drinking, watering their animals and for irrigating the land for cultivation. And a portion of it was barren which could neither hold water nor produce vegetation. The first is the example of a person who comprehends Allaah's religion and gets benefit [from the knowledge] that Allaah has revealed through me and learns and then teaches.<sup>99</sup> The last example is that of a person who does not care for it and does not take Allaah's guidance revealed through me."<sup>100</sup>

99 In the narration of *Sahih Muslim*, the second type is mentioned "One who acquires knowledge of religion and imparts it to others."

100 It was narrated by Aboo Moosaa al-Ash'aree in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 67, no. 79 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, pp. 1233-4, no. 5668.

Al-Qurtubee and others said: "The Prophet (ﷺ) made a parable of what he brought of the religion with a general downpour which came at the time of their need for it, and that was the state of people prior to his prophethood. As the rain brings to life a dead land, religious knowledge gives life to the dead heart. He then compared those who heard him to different types of earth on which rain falls. Among them is the scholar who acts on his knowledge and teaches others, he is equivalent to the good earth that absorbs and benefits itself and grows vegetation and benefits others. Among them is a scholar who has gathered a vast amount of knowledge, a leading scholar of his time, except that he does not do its recommended deeds or he does not understand deeply what he gathered, except that he conveyed it to others. He is equivalent to the ground on which water settled and people benefited from it. He is the one alluded to in the prophetic statement:

(( نَضَرَ اللَّهُ امْرَأً سَمِعَ مِنَّا شَيْئًا فَبَلَّغَهُ كَمَا سَمِعَ فَرُبَّ مُبَلِّغٍ أَوْعَىٰ مِنْ سَامِعٍ ))

"May Allaah bless a person who hears something from us and conveys it as he hears it. For, perhaps the one to whom it is conveyed has more understanding than the one who heard it." [*Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 3, p. 1038, no. 3652; *Sunan Ibn-i-Majah*, vol. 1, p. 131, no. 230, and authenticated in *Saheeh Sunan at-Tirmitheeh*, vol. 2, p. 337, no. 2139] And among them is one who hears knowledge, but does not retain it or act on it, or convey it to others. He is equivalent to barren land that does not accept water or it pollutes it. The parable combines the first two praiseworthy groups based on benefit coming from them both and isolates the third due to its lack of benefit." (*Fat'hul-Baaree*, vol. , p. , Kitaab: Ilm Baab: Fadl man 'alima wa 'allama)

## CONDITIONS OF THE HEART

And in the narration of Kumayl ibn Ziyaad from 'Alee in which he said:

(( الْقُلُوبُ أَوْعِيَةٌ فَخَيْرُهَا أَوْعَاها ))

“Hearts are vessels. The best of them is the most retentive.”<sup>101</sup>

It has reached me from some of the *salaf* that it was said: “The hearts are Allaah’s vessels<sup>102</sup> on His earth. The most beloved of them to Allaah the Almighty is the most sensitive and pure.” This is a good example, for, if the heart is sensitive and soft<sup>103</sup>,

101 Shaykh Saleem identified its source in *Hilyatul-Awliyyaa*, vol. 1, pp. 79-80. Ibn 'Abdul-Barr said regarding it: “This *hadeeth* is so famous among the scholars that it does not need a chain of narrators.” (*Jaami' Bayaan al-Ilm*, vol. 2, p. 112)

102 Those who said it meant, “containers created by Allaah” and not “vessels containing Allaah” – may Allaah give us refuge from such an evil thought. This false thought was expressed in a popular fabricated Soofee tradition: “The heavens and the earth couldn't contain Allaah, only the heart of the believer could contain Him.” Besides being illogical, it contradicts Allaah's attribute of transcendence and opens the satanic door for the worship of human beings.

The phrase “Allaah's vessels” would come under *idaafatut-tashreef* (the attribution of ennoblement), like “Allaah's houses” in reference to mosques. All vessels belong to Allaah as He created them, however, those hearts that contain His truth are the most noble of all vessels. As a general rule, such attribution should be left to the texts of the *Sharee'ah* to specify and not any writer or thinker, as it is a dangerous area, though not as dangerous as the area of *idaafatuth-thaat* (the attribution of self), like “Allaah's face or hands”. In figurative speech, scholars have traditionally been somewhat lenient in this regard.

103 'Aa'ishah reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) praised gentleness saying:

(( إِنْ الرَّفْقَ لَا يَكُونُ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا زَانَهُ وَلَا يَنْزَعُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا شَانَهُ ))

“Indeed, whenever gentleness is in anything it beautifies it and whenever it is removed from anything it tarnishes it.” (*Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1370, no. 6274 and *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 3, p. 1345, no. 4790)

Jareer related that the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) said:

(( مَنْ يُحْرِمِ الرَّفْقَ يُحْرِمِ الْخَيْرَ ))

“He who is deprived of gentleness is deprived of [great] good.” (*Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1370, no. 6270 *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 3, p. 1345, no. 4791)

'Abdullaah ibn Mughaffal narrated that Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

(( إِنْ اللَّهَ رَافِقٌ يُحِبُّ الرَّفْقَ وَيُعْطِي عَلَيْهِ مَا لَا يُعْطِي عَلَى الْعُنْفِ ))

“Allaah is gentle and He likes gentleness. He gives for gentleness what He doesn't give for harshness.” (*Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1370, no. 6273 and

it easily accepts knowledge, and the knowledge then becomes firmly rooted in it and [the heart] is affected by it. On the other hand, if [the heart] is hard and harsh it is difficult for it to accept knowledge.<sup>104</sup>

*Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 3, p. 1345, no. 4789)

The Prophet (ﷺ) insisted on gentleness even in responding to insults.

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا قَالَتْ اسْتَأْذَنَ رَهْطٌ مِنَ الْيَهُودِ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَقَالُوا السَّامُ عَلَيْكَ فَقُلْتَ بَلْ عَلَيْكُمُ السَّامُ وَاللَّعْنَةُ فَقَالَ يَا عَائِشَةُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ زَهِيْقٌ يُجِبُّ الرَّفْقَ فِي الْأَمْرِ كُلِّهِ قُلْتَ أَوْلَمْ تَسْمَعِ مَا قَالُوا قَالَ قُلْتَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ

‘Aa’ishah reported that a group of Jews came to Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) and sought his audience saying: *as-saamu ‘alaykum* (may you be poisoned). I said: “Rather, may you be poisoned and cursed.” The Prophet (ﷺ) said to her: “O ‘Aa’ishah! Indeed Allaah is gentle and He loves gentleness in every matter.” She replied: “Didn’t you hear what they said?” He replied: “I said: Same to you.” (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 9, p. 48, no. 61 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3, p. 1184, no. 5384)

104 The main causes that lead to a hardened heart are identified in the following six verses from the Qur’aan that expound on the topic of hardened hearts:

1. Ignoring Allaah’s Signs

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ قَسْوَةً

“Then after that your heart became hardened like stones or harder..”

(Soorah al-Baqarah, 2: 74)

After the miracle of a dead man briefly coming back to life and identifying his murderers when his corpse was struck with a part of the sacrificed cow, the Jews denied it and their hearts became hardened. Allaah went on to say in a parable that some stones are even softer than their hearts as they acknowledge the truth to which they were called. (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 1, pp. 260-1)

Human hearts become hardened whenever they ignore the signs of Allaah. The signs of Allaah are for human guidance. Consequently, when they are deliberately and consistently ignored, the heart becomes hardened to them and they have no effect. Allaah’s signs are all around humans and even within themselves. Before, during and after a person commits a sin, a variety of warning signals go off like alarms. Prior to committing a sin the innate conscience recognizes the sin, so the potential sinner can stop himself or herself before the thought becomes an act. This conscience is the awareness of good and evil which Allaah inspired in each and every human heart, saying: “**He inspired it know its corruption and piety.**” () Then again, as the potential sinner plods ahead ignoring his conscience, the angel assigned to every person advises him not to go ahead. Following the spiritual signs, Allaah then sends a series of physical signs to discourage the potential sinner. The physical signs could be another person’s advice, a

telephone call, a flat tire, etc. They give the potential sinner a chance to re-think what he is about to do. If he reverses his decision he earns for himself a reward from Allaah as the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Whoever intends to do evil deed and does not do it earns one reward.” () Even while actually doing the sin, further signs are sent so that the sinner can stop before completing the act. And after the sin, other signs are sent to encourage the sinner to repent. When these signs are continually ignored, the heart develops a shell which effectively seals it off from the signs and their effects.

## 2. Breaking Allaah's Covenant

فَبِمَا نَقَضْتُمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَانَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ .

“Because they broke their covenant, I cursed them and made their hearts grow hard...” (Soorah al-Maa'idah, 5: 13)

The “covenant” refers to *Salaah*, *zakaah*, belief in the prophets, honoring, obeying and assisting them. In the case of *Salaah*, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “The covenant between us and them is *Salaah*, whoever abandons it has become a disbeliever.” () Those who only pray on Fridays, or during Ramadan have broken their covenant and contact with Allaah. Consequently, the prescribed prayers will not have the intended effect of preventing sins as Allaah said: “**Indeed prescribed prayer prevents evil speech and evil deeds.**” () The heart which daily commits sins by neglecting prayer becomes fossilized and impermeable to its spiritual effects. As a result, the act and words of formal prayers become customary rituals done for every reason except to communicate with Allaah and to please Him.

Likewise, obedience to the prophets is a critical element of the covenant of faith with God.

## 3. Ignoring Trials

فَلَوْلَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

“When My torment reached them, why did they not believe with humility, instead their hearts became hardened and Satan made made what they did seem good to them.” (Soorah al-An'aam, 6: 43) Allaah sends trials to strengthen the believers, or to remind those of them who have strayed to return to the straight path and the disbelievers to find the true religion of God, or as a punishment for hypocrites and those unable to benefit from the reminder.

## Strengthening Eemaan

Sa'd reported that he asked the Prophet (ﷺ) who among mankind had the most trials and he replied, “The prophets, then those most like them and then those most like them. Man is tested according to the level of his faith.

*If his faith is firm, his trials increase in severity, and if there is weakness in his faith, he will be tried accordingly.” (Saheeh Sunan at-Tirmitheh, vol. 2, p. 286, no. 1956.)*

### Reminder

Tests sometimes serve as a punishing reminder to those who have gone astray and an encouragement for them to return to the correct path. When people deviate, they seldom listen to the advice of those around them. However, when a calamity strikes them or those near and dear to them, it jolts those who still have some faith into recognizing their error.

{ وَلَنذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ }

**“I will make them taste a lesser punishment before the greater punishment that perhaps they may return [to the right path].”** (Soorah as-Sajadah, 32: 21)

### Hypocrisy

Calamities also expose those who falsely claim faith, as well as show those who disbelieve that they choose hell by their own free will. There have been cases of people converting to Islaam for the wrong reasons, and, after finding more difficulties in their lives than prior to their conversion, reverting to their former beliefs. God states in the Final Revelation:

{ أَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يَتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا ءَامَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الْكَاذِبِينَ }

“Do people imagine that they will be left alone and not tested with affliction because they say, ‘We believe’? Indeed, I have tested those before you. Allaah will know those who are truthful and those who lie.” (Soorah al-‘Ankaboot, 29: 2)

### Punishment

Those who transgress the limits set by God expose themselves to punishment in this life and the next. Throughout the Qur’aan, Allaah describes numerous past nations who rejected divine guidance and were subsequently destroyed. These stories serve as warnings to humankind of the consequences of rebellion against the commandments of God.

{ فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ }

**“Let those who contradict his command beware of being afflicted by a trial or a severe punishment.”** (Soorah an-Noor, 24: 63)

The trials cause those who are sincere about life to be humble, to contemplate their states and to correct their errors. However, if the trials are continually ignored, the proud and arrogant heart becomes inoculated to the warnings,

opposed to guidance and hardened in its stance against the truth.

#### 4. Oppression (*Zulm*)

لِيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ

“That He would make what was thrown by Satan a trial for those in whose hearts there is a disease and whose hearts are hardened. And, indeed the oppressors are far astray.” (Soorah al-Hajj, 22: 53)

The greatest form of oppression is *shirk*, as the sage, Luqmaan, told his son: “**Indeed shirk is the gravest form of oppression.**” (Soorah ) One who is accustomed to calling on others besides Allaah and finds his needs fulfilled will have great difficulty giving this practise up. His heart becomes hardened to the message of the prophets; to worship God alone. In defense of idolatry, Satan has prepared many excuses that become a trial for both disbelievers and believers.

#### 5. Remembrance of Allaah has no effect

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

“So woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allaah.” (Soorah az-Zumar, 39: 22)

Those who, when reminded of Allaah and His commands, turn away, and scoff at and scorn those who remind them, their hearts have become hardened to the remembrance of God. The various religious obligations were prescribed primarily to keep human beings conscious of Allaah in order to help them make the right choices in life. Likewise, all acts of righteousness are forms of remembrance of Allaah, as it is He who guided humans to them through His prophets and messengers.

#### 6. Repeated Sins over time

فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

“The term was prolonged for them and their hearts became hardened. And many of them were corrupt.” (Soorah al-Hadeed, 57: 16)

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) warned against scorning any sins saying: “Beware of scorned sins.” () When a person develops the habit of ignoring minor sins, his heart becomes progressively hardened to sin in general and major sins then become easy for him to commit. By being conscious of the smallest of sins and scrupulously avoiding them, the believer becomes firmly protected from major sins.

On the other hand, if one does not make a conscious effort to revive one's faith and reflect on one's actions, even pure and sincere acts of worship can deteriorate into blind rituals over time. As is said, “Familiarity breeds

Along with that, [the heart] must be pure<sup>105</sup> and healthy<sup>106</sup>

contempt.” The mind shifts into automatic mode and the body performs according to commands, while the heart dies.

- 105 Al-Hasan al-Bagree once told a man, “Cure your heart, for Allaah desires that His slaves should purify their hearts.” (*Jaami‘ al-‘Uloom wal-Hikam*, vol. 1, p. 211) Jamaal al-Din Zarbozo noted that, “the heart cannot become purified until the person knows Allaah, extols Him, loves Him, fears Him, has hope in Him and trusts Him, and his heart is filled with these attributes. This is the true realization of the statement, “*Laa ilaaha illallaah* there is no God except Allaah.” (*Commentary on the Forty Hadith of Al-Nawawi*, vol. 1, p. 470)
- 106 The “healthy heart” is one of the criteria for success in the next life. Allaah said:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

“On a day that neither wealth nor children will benefit, except one who comes to Allaah with a healthy heart.” (Soorah ash-Shu‘araa, 26: 88-9)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also prayed for a healthy heart during his regular prayers.

عَنْ شَدَّادِ بْنِ أَوْسٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ كَانَ يَقُولُ فِي صَلَاتِهِ (( اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الثَّبَاتَ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَالْعَزِيمَةَ عَلَى الرَّشْدِ وَأَسْأَلُكَ شُكْرَ نِعْمَتِكَ وَحُسْنَ عِبَادَتِكَ وَأَسْأَلُكَ قَلْبًا سَلِيمًا وَسَانًا صَادِقًا وَأَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ خَيْرِ مَا تَعْلَمُ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا تَعْلَمُ وَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ لِمَا تَعْلَمُ ))

Shaddaad ibn Aws reported that Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) used to say in his *salaah*: “*Allaahumma innee as‘aluka ath-thabaata fil-amri wal-‘azeemata ‘alar-rushdi wa as‘aluka shukra ni‘matika wa husna ‘ibaadatika wa as‘aluka qalban saleeman wa lisaanan saadiqan wa as‘aluka min khayri maa ta‘lamu wa a‘oothu bika min sharri maa ta‘lamu wa astaghfiruka limaa ta‘lam* [O Allaah! I ask You for firmness in my affairs and drive for righteousness. And I ask You for gratitude for Your blessings and goodness in worshipping You. And I ask You for a healthy heart and a truthful tongue. And I ask You from the best of what You know and I seek refuge in You from the evil of what You know and I ask Your forgiveness for what You know].” (*Da‘eef Sunan an-Nasaa‘ee*, p. 45, no. 80, *Sunan at-Tirmithi*, vol. , p. , no. Kitaab: da‘awaat - weak)

### Signs of a Pure and Healthy Heart

Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned the following points in this regard:

One considers himself as belonging to the next world and not this world. He is a stranger in this world anxious to reach his abode in the Hereafter.

One continues to be upset with himself any time he commits a sin until he finally and completely repents to Allaah.

One is more upset and unhappy if he misses his daily recitation of the Qur’aan and *thiqr*, than if he had lost his wealth.

One finds greater pleasure in worshipping Allaah than any pleasure in



so that knowledge can grow and bear good fruit in it. Otherwise, if it accepts knowledge, and it has in it mud and filth, it will corrupt the knowledge and be like weeds in cultivation. If it does not prevent the seed from sprouting along with it, it will at least hinder its growth and flowering.<sup>107</sup> This [point] is clear to those

eating and drinking.

One's worries and concerns about this world leave him whenever he begins his formal prayers.

One's only concern and worries are concerning Allaah and doing deeds only for His sake.

One is more concerned and stingy about wasting time than a greedy person is with respect to his wealth.

One is more concerned about the correctness of his deeds than with the performance of the deeds themselves. (*Ighaathah al-Lahfaan*, vol. 1, pp. 70-3 quoted in *Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi*, vol. 1, pp. 471-2).

- 107 This situation is that of knowledge being acquired which has no effect on the one acquiring it. The "mud" is equivalent to *riyaa* and the "filth" equivalent to corrupt desires. *Riyaa* prevents the flowering of knowledge and destroys the value of the fruit, while corrupt desires prevents the seed from sprouting and allow weeds to grow instead.

Imaam Sufyaan ath-Thawree (719-777 CE), a contemporary of Imaam Aboo Haneefah, and a leading scholar of *hadeeth*, related that as a youth when he first began to seek knowledge, his mother advised him, "If you write down 10 words and your faith hasn't improved, check yourself."

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) described the grave dangers of acquiring knowledge for fame and glory. He clarified that the ultimate end of one who does not correct his intentions and repent is none other than Hell (*Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3, p. 1055, no. 4688) – May Allaah protect us from such an evil end.

Furthermore, the Prophet (ﷺ) himself used to seek refuge from such a state in a variety of supplications.

عن أبي موسى الأشعري قال خطبنا رسول الله ﷺ ذات يوم فقال: (( أيها الناس اتقوا هذا الشرك فإنه أخفى من ديبب الثمل فقال له من شاء الله أن يقول وكيف نتقيه وهو أخفى من ديبب الثمل يا رسول الله قال قولوا اللهم إنا نعوذ بك من أن نشرك بك شيئاً نعلمه وتستغفرك لِمَا لَا نَعْلَمُ )) .

Aboo Moosaa al-Ash'aree related that one day Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) gave them a sermon and then said, "Fear this hidden Shirk, for it is even less conspicuous than the crawling of an ant." Someone asked, "O Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ), how can we avoid it when it is more hidden than the crawling of an ant?" He (ﷺ) answered: "Say: 'Allaahumma innaa na'oothu bika min an-nushrika bika shay'an na'lamuhu, wa nastaghfiruka limaa

*laa na'lamuh.*[O Allaah, we seek refuge in you from committing *Shirk* knowingly, and ask you forgiveness for (the *Shirk* that we may commit) unknowingly].” (*Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 4, p. 403 and authenticated by al-Hilaalee in *ar-Riyaa*.)

In another narration, Aboo Bakr related that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

(( الشُّرْكُ فِيكُمْ أَخْفَى مِنْ دَيْبِ النَّمْلِ، وَسَادُّكَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ إِذَا فَعَلْتَهُ أَذْهَبَ عَنْكَ صَعَارَ الشُّرْكِ وَكِبَارَهُ، تَقُولُ: اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَشْرِكَ بِكَ وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ، وَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ لِمَا لَا أَعْلَمُ )).

“*Shirk amongst you is more hidden than the crawling of an ant, and I shall tell you of something which, if you do it, will remove from you both the minor and the major Shirk. Say: Allaahumma innee a’oothu bika an ushrika bika wa ana a’lamu wa astaghfiruka limaa laa a’lam* [O Allaah, surely I seek refuge in you from knowingly worshipping others besides You and I ask Your forgiveness for what I don’t know].” (Authenticated in *Saheeh al-Jaami’as-Sagheer*, no. 3731)

### Private Worship

Another practical way to develop an awareness of *riyaa* and oppose it directly is to build up a body of acts of worship all of which are done in private. Yasir al-Qadhi noted in his work on *riyaa* that, “private worship accomplishes two things.

**Firstly**, by not showing one’s actions to other people, there can be no danger of seeking to impress them, nor can they ruin one’s good deeds with praise.

**Secondly**, this type of action increases a person’s *Eemaan*, and thus helps to protect one from *riyaa*.

Some scholars of *Ahlus-Sunnah* advised: “The people (before us) liked to perform private acts of worship, so much so, that even their wives or close friends would not be aware of it.” Whenever a person does a private good deed, he should try his best to make sure that other people do not find out about it. Informing others of one’s good deeds is among the traps by which Satan draws the believers into *riyaa*’.

Sufyaan ath-Thawree said, “Whenever a worshipper does a good deed in private, Satan keeps whispering to him until he tells other people about it. It then changes from a private act of worship to a public one.” (*Talbees Iblees*, p. 180.) When some scholars were moved to tears during their lectures out of fear of Allaah, they would wipe their faces and tell their audiences that they had a severe cold. (*Talbees Iblees*, pp. 150 & 196) As Allaah says, describing the believers:

وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ

“And in the hours before dawn, they ask Allaah for forgiveness.”

(*Soorah ath-Thaariyaat*, 51: 18)

who reflect.

The summary of the [previous] statement is that if [the

In other words, private worship is a part of the characteristics of the true believers. (*Ar-Riyaa: Hidden Shirk*, p. 79-80)

For corrupted desires, the Prophet (ﷺ) prescribed another comprehensive supplication, well worth learning:

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ ((اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ قَلْبٍ لَا يَخْشَعُ وَمِنْ دَعَاءٍ لَا يُسْمَعُ وَمِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا تَسْتَجِبُ وَمِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ أَلْزِمِ))

Ibn 'Umar quoted Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: "Allaahumma innee a'oothu bika min qalbin laa yakhsha', wa min du'aa'in laa yusma', wa min nafsin laa tushba', wa min 'ilmin laa yanfa', a'oothu bika bin haa'ulaa'il-arba' [O Allaah! I seek refuge in You from a heart which does not fear (You), a prayer not heard, a soul which cannot be satisfied, and knowledge of no benefit. I seek refuge in You from these four.]" (*Sunan Ibn-i-Majah*, vol. 5, p. 207, no. 3837 ST, SN, and authenticated in *Saheeh al-Jaami'as-Sagheer*, vol. 1, p. 140, no. 1308. See also *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1425, no. 6568 and *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 1, p. 401, no. 1543 from Aboo Hurayrah. The wording here is from *Sunan at-Tirmithee*.)

In this *du'aa* the Prophet (ﷺ) first mentioned the corrupt root, the heart that does not fear Allaah. The hardened, diseased heart whose prayers are not heard because they are insincere, whose desires for the pleasures of this world know no end and for whom real knowledge is of no benefit because it points to the truth while he desires falsehood. Instead of the knowledge being used to worship Allaah, it is used to fulfil the vain, worldly desires of the corrupted heart. It is used to defend sin and to promote disobedience and innovation.

### Signs of a Diseased Heart

Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned the following points in this regard:

- One does not feel any hurt or pain when he commits evil deeds and sins.
- One finds both pleasure in committing sins and tranquillity after doing them.
- One looks after less important matters and neglects more important and critical ones.
- One dislikes the truth and has difficulty accepting or submitting to it.
- One feels discomfort being in the company of the righteous and feels comfort in the company of the sinful.
- One is susceptible to misconceptions and doubts and is attracted to debates and arguments about them rather than to reading Qur'aan and other such beneficial acts.
- One is not affected by any kind of admonition. (*Ighaathah al-Lahfaan*, vol. 1, p. 548 quoted in *Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi*, vol. 1, pp. 472-3).

heart] is utilized for [knowing] the truth it has two sides:

1. A side that advances towards the truth.<sup>108</sup> From this perspective [the heart] is referred to as a container and a vessel<sup>109</sup> because that [name] necessitates what it

108 From this perspective the heart is referred to as being soft and sensitive, and consequently, it is attracted to the truth.

109 The container metaphor used in other contexts can be found in *hadeeths* as expressions of both the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions. For example, Aboo Hurayrah referred to the knowledge which he learned from the Prophet (ﷺ) as a container saying:

(( حَفِظْتُ عَنِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَعَاءَيْنِ فَأَمَّا أَحَدُهُمَا فَبَشْتُهُ وَأَمَّا الْآخَرَ فَلَوْ بَشْتُهُ قَطَعَ هَذَا  
الْبَلْعُومُ ))

“I memorized from Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) two containers. As for one of them, I spread it. As for the other, if I were to spread it this head [of mine] would be severed.” (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 89, no. 121). A common Arabic linguistic euphemism, the term “container” is used, but the knowledge contained in it was intended. In some narrations “three containers” are mentioned; two were spread and one was kept hidden. That is, if all that Aboo Hurayrah memorized were written it would have filled two or three large containers. Scholars explained that the hidden part contained the names of the evil rulers, their states and their eras. Aboo Hurayrah used to indirectly identify some of them without openly naming them for fear of losing his life. For example he used to say: “I seek refuge from the beginning of 60 and the rule of children,” alluding to caliphate of Yazeed, the son of Caliph Mu’aawiyah, which was in the 60<sup>th</sup> year after the Hijrah. Allaah answered the prayer of Aboo Hurayrah as he died one year before the year 60 AH. Ibn al-Muneer said: “The Baatinites use this *hadeeth* to justify their falsehood whereby they believe that the *Sharee’ah* has an outer and inner aspect and that the essence of the inner aspect is the abandonment of the rules of the religion. However, what Aboo Hurayrah intended by “be severed” was that evil people would sever it if they heard his dispraise of their activities and his labeling their path deviant. (*Fat’hul-Baaree*, vol. 1, p. 27, no. 120)

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) also referred to deeds metaphorically as containers:

عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ أَبِي سُفْيَانَ يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: (( إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ كَالْوَعَاءِ إِذَا  
خَتَبَ أَسْفَلُهُ خَتَابَ أَعْلَاهُ وَإِذَا فَسَدَ أَسْفَلُهُ فَسَدَ أَعْلَاهُ ))

Mu’aawiyah ibn Abee Sufyaan quoted Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: “Indeed, deeds are like containers, if what is at their bottom is good, what is at the top will be good. And if what is at the bottom is bad, what is at the top will also be bad.” (*Sunan Ibn-i-Majah*, vol. 5, p. 461, no. 4199 and

contains and what is placed in it.<sup>110</sup> This is an existing, affirmative<sup>111</sup> characteristic.

authenticated in *Saḥeeḥ Sunan Ibn Maajah*, vol. 2, p. 409, no. 3385)

Even the stomach was referred to metaphorically as a container by the Prophet (ﷺ):

عَنْ مِقْدَامِ بْنِ مَعْدِي كَرِبَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: (( مَا مَلَأَ أَدَمِي وَعَاءٌ شَرًّا مِنْ بَطْنٍ بِحَسَبِ ابْنِ آدَمَ أَكَلَتْ يَقْمَنُ صَلْبَهُ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَا مَحَالَةَ فَثَلَّثَ لِبَطْنِهِ وَثَلَّثَ لِشَرَابِهِ وَثَلَّثَ لِنَفْسِهِ )) .

Miqdaam ibn Ma'dee Karib said that he heard Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) say: "The worst container a human can fill is the stomach. A few bits of food to straighten his back is enough for a human being. However, if [he] must [eat more], then [let it be] one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breathing." (*Saḥeeḥ Sunan at-Tirmithi*, vol. 2, p. 281, no. 1939)

Furthermore, one of the female Companions referred to her womb metaphorically as a container:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو أَنَّ امْرَأَةً قَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ ابْنِي هَذَا كَانَ بَطْنِي لَهُ وَعَاءٌ وَثَدْيِي لَهُ سِقَاءٌ وَحِجْرِي لَهُ حِوَاءٌ وَإِنَّ أَبَاهُ خَلَقَنِي وَأَرَادَ أَنْ يَنْتَزِعَنِي مِنْهُ فَقَالَ لَهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ (( أَنْتِ أَحَقُّ بِهِ مَا لَمْ تَنْكِحِي )) :

'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr reported that a woman said: "O Messenger of Allaah! My stomach was a container for this son of mine, my breast provided him drink, and my lap protected him. Then his father divorced me and wants to take him from me?" The Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) replied: "You have more right to him as long as you do not remarry [someone else]." (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 2, p. 616, no. 2269 and authenticated in *Saḥeeḥ Sunan Abee Daawood*, vol. 2, p. 430, no. 1991)

110 As Ibn Taymiyyah stated in the beginning of this section, the heart relative to knowledge is like a container relative to water. Prior to this section he pointed out that the heart was created to know and understand the ultimate truth, Allaah, first and foremost, and then every other truth which Allaah revealed in the way of life which He named "Islam".

111 The technical term *Sifat wujud* (existent characteristic) refer to attributes that exist relative to something. For example, Allaah's attributes of transcendence ('uloo), His hand and His descent are all existent attributes and as such they must be affirmed. From the perspective of their affirmation they are also referred to as a *Sifat thuboot* (affirmed characteristic). The opposite is a *Sifat 'adam* (non-existent characteristic) which is an attribute that does not exist relative to something. For example, tiredness, sleep and equal are non-existent attributes of Allaah, as He stated in *Aayatul-Kursee* and *Soorah al-Ikhlaas*. Consequently, these characteristics must be

2. A side that turns away from falsehood. From this perspective [the heart] is referred to as being pure, healthy and clean. Because these names infer the absence of evil and the non-existence of filth and mud. This characteristic is one of non-existence and negation.<sup>112</sup>

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negated from Allaah and, as such, they are referred to from this perspective as a *Sifat nafyi* (negating characteristic). In the context of the heart, the characteristics of being sensitive and soft, which make the heart open to the truth and turn it into a vessel for the truth, are existent characteristics. It is their presence in the heart that make it advance towards the truth.

According to Shaykh Al-Uthaymeen, "Allaah's attributes may be divided into two categories: affirmative and negative. The affirmative attributes are those that Allaah affirmed for Himself, like, life, knowledge, and ability. They must be affirmed for Allaah in the way appropriate for Him, because Allaah affirmed them for Himself and He knows best His attributes.

The negative attributes are those that Allaah negated from Himself, like, oppression. They must be negated from Allaah because He negated them from Himself, but one must believe that their opposites are attributes of Allaah from the most perfect perspective, because negation is not complete unless it contains an affirmation.

﴿ وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا ﴾

**"And your Lord does not oppress anyone."**

(Soorah al-Kahf, 18: 49)

It is obligatory to deny the attribution of oppression to Allaah along with the belief in Allaah's attribute of perfect justice.

The affirmative attributes may be further divided into two categories: Personal (*thaatiyyah*) and consequential (*fi'liyyah*). Personal attributes are those which were, are and will be attributed to Him, like "hearing" and "seeing". Consequential attributes are those related to His will; if He wishes to do them, He does them and if He does not wish to do them, He does not do them, like His settling above the throne, or His coming. It is possible for an attribute to be both personal and consequential from two different perspectives. For example, "speech". From the perspective of the origin of the attribute it is personal because Allaah was and is speaking. While from the perspective of some [of His] speech, it is consequential because it is related to His will. He speaks what He wishes when He wishes." (*Sharh Lum'atul-I'tiqaad*, p.)

<sup>112</sup> The characteristic of purity and cleanliness negate the existence of filth and whatever would hinder the acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, it is referred to as a "non-existent" and "negating" characteristic. For the heart to function effectively it must have both the existent characteristic of sensitivity as well as the negating characteristic of purity. Similar to this is the fact that the declaration of faith is incomplete without the non-existent

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characteristic of “nothing worthy of worship (*laa ilaaha*)” along with the affirming characteristic of “except Allaah (*illallah*)”. For, ancient Arabs affirmed Allaah's existence while affirming the existence of minor gods.

## CHAPTER: *The Lost Heart*

**W**ith this it becomes clear that if [the heart] is used for falsehood it also has two sides:

1. A side of existence wherein it is devoted to falsehood, craving it and completely occupied with it.<sup>113</sup>
2. A side of non-existence wherein it swerves from the truth and is unwilling to accept it.<sup>114</sup>

This [description] clearly, well and truthfully explains the contents of the following lines of poetry:

إِذَا مَا وَضَعْتَ الْقَلْبَ فِي غَيْرِ مَوْضِعٍ \* بغيرِ إِيَّاءِ فَهُوَ قَلْبٌ مُضَيِّعٌ

*If you put the heart in other than its location  
With no container it is for the heart ruination*

[The poet] mentioned this concerning [the heart] when he wanted to describe the state of one who lost his heart; one who oppressed himself<sup>115</sup> by becoming occupied in falsehood which

113 Falsehood is an existent characteristic in this heart and what affirms it and strengthens it is the craving desire for it. Consequently, treating such a heart requires not only removing the falsehood which could simply be a result of ignorance, easily treatable by knowledge, but also the more difficult task of removing desire for it. For, as long as desire for it remains, the heart remains enslaved and easily falls back into sin and corruption, time and time again. May Allaah protect us from such a wretched state.

114 Truth becomes a non-existent characteristic of this heart, as there is no room for it. And its craving for sin causes it to detest the truth and turn away from it, denying and negating it. Allaah describes this state as follows:

وَأِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرِّشَادِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ العَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا

**“If they see the path of guidance they will not take it, but if they see the path of error they will take it as a way.”**

(Soorah al-A'raaf, 7: 146)

115 The author follows the Qur'aanic definition for sin as “self-oppression”

وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ

**“Whoever goes beyond the limits set by Allaah oppresses himself.”**

(Soorah at-Talaaq, 65: 1)



filled his heart until no space remained in it for the truth nor was there any way to penetrate it. He [aptly] described the state of both sides of this heart, and characterized its two paths.

1. He first mentioned its attribute of existence saying: "If you put the heart in other than its location." He is saying, "If you employed [the heart] for other than what it was created and used it for falsehood until [the heart] drowned in it."

Falsehood has two levels:

- a) Distraction from the truth without opposing it. [This level is a result of factors] like thoughts and intentions containing worldly attachments and desires of the soul.<sup>116</sup>
- b) Opposition to the truth, blocking its path. [This level may be a result of factors] like false opinions and destructive desires coming from disbelief, hypocrisy, innovations and the like.<sup>117</sup>

Sin may involve the oppression of others in this life, however the greater consequence of punishment in the next life for the sinner makes it, relatively speaking, self-oppression. Umm Salamah reported that Allaah's Messenger

(ﷺ) said, "I am only a human being, and you bring your disputes to me. Perhaps some of you are more eloquent in their plea than others, and I judge in their favor according to what I hear from them. So, whatever I rule in anyone's favor which belongs to his brother, he should not take any of it, because I have only granted him a piece of Hell." (Sunan Abu Dawud, vol. 3, p. 1016, no. 3576 and authenticated in *Saheeh Sunan Abee Daawood*, vol. 2, p. 684, no. 3058).

- 116 In this case, the person is too busy with worldly affairs to be concerned with the truth. Thus, they are in opposition to the truth by default and not due to deliberate and hostile resistance. People in this situation may wake up to the truth when calamity and tragedy strikes them, or someone who they respect becomes guided causing them to stop and reflect, or they hear a lecture that touches them, etc. Their opposition is fundamentally a result of ignorance of the truth. They are like the *daalleen* "the lost ones" mentioned

in *Soorah al-Faatihah*, whom the Prophet (ﷺ) identified as the Christians. (Reported by 'Adee ibn Haatim and authenticated in *Saheeh Sunan at-Tirmithi*, vol. 3, pp. 19-20, no. 2353.) This group is closest to Islaam in most instances, as Allaah said: "**You will find the closest of them in love to the believers, those who call themselves Christians...**" (*Soorah al-Maa'idah*, 5: 82).

- 117 When people know the truth but choose falsehood instead, their opposition becomes most adamant and violent. It is this group whose hearts become

Rather, the heart is only created for the remembrance of Allaah and everything besides that is not a suitable location for it.

2. Then [the poet] mentioned the non-existent characteristic of the “container”, saying: “If you placed it without a container you will lose it.” There is no container with you, as we say: “I attended the gathering [of learning] without an inkpot.”<sup>118</sup> The term “container” describes the person placing his heart and not the heart itself. And Allaah knows best.

The explanation of this sentence – and Allaah knows best – is that he says: If you put your heart in another place using it for falsehood, you will have no container in which to put truth, remembrance [of God] and knowledge. [Consequently,] when what is the right of the heart is revealed to it, your heart will be ruined<sup>119</sup>. You ruined [your heart] in both [possible] ways, even though they are one and the same: From one perspective, that you put it in other than its place and from the other perspective that you had no vessel with you to be a container for the truth which must be given to it. Similarly, if it is said to a king who has taken an [excessive] interest in games: “If you are busy with other than your kingdom, and there is no one in the kingdom to run it?” He is a lost king.

However, the container here<sup>120</sup> is the heart itself. That is the

sealed and who command evil and prohibit good (*Soorah at-Tawbah*,

9: 67). They are equivalent to Jews whom the Prophet (ﷺ) identified as the *maghdoobi ‘alayhim* “those on whom is Allaah’s anger” of *Soorah al-Fatihah*. (See previous reference) In general, these people are the farthest from Islaam, as Allaah said: “**You will find those having the greatest enmity to the believers are the Jews and pagans.**” (*Soorah al-Maa’idah*, 5: 82)

118 That is, “without an inkpot containing ink in which to dip the pen in order to record the knowledge and protect it from loss.”

119 The heart will not be able to receive its needs, as it is not prepared as a container to accept them. Inability to benefit from the truth leads to the

ultimate state of ruin and loss from which the Prophet (ﷺ) often sought refuge in Allaah; knowledge of no benefit.

120 “Here” means “according to this interpretation”. Ibn Taymiyyah discusses two ways in which the couplet of poetry could be interpreted relative to the heart and the container. In the first, as he explains here, the heart is itself

case because nothing can take the place of the heart with regard to what must be put in it, for **no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another.**<sup>121</sup>

The couplet<sup>122</sup> conveyed two images by mentioning two characteristics of [the heart]. [This mode of expression] is similar to the Almighty's statement:

نَزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ هَدًى  
لِلنَّاسِ وَأَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ

**"He revealed to you the Book in truth confirming what was present in front of him; and He revealed the Torah and the Gospel previously as guidance for people and He revealed the Criterion."** (*Soorah Aal 'Imraan*, 3:3-4)

Qataadah<sup>123</sup> and ar-Rabee'<sup>124</sup> both said: "[The Criterion] is the Qur'aan that became the standard for distinguishing between

the container. If one is in a position to receive the needs of the heart, but one's heart is not present, the heart suffers loss similar to the loss of one who busies his heart with useless or harmful activities.

- 121 Ibn Taymiyyah supports his statement that nothing can take the place of the heart with a verse that has been repeated in the Qur'aan four times. Although the verse refers to no other human being carrying the sins of others, the general concept of individual responsibility is implied.

وَلَا تَرَوْا وَازِرَةً وَرَزَّ آخِرَى

**"No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another."**

*Soorahs al-An'aam*, 6: 164; *al-Israa*, 17: 15; *Faatir*, 35: 18;  
and *az-Zumar*, 39: 7

No other organ or limb can fulfill the function of the spiritual heart as the interpreter of data gathered by the senses. It is the location of understanding and decision making, while other organs and limbs follow its instructions.

- 122 The couplet of poetry, "If you put the heart in other than its location \* with no container it is for the heart ruination."  
123 Qataadah ibn Di'aamah (680-736 CE), blind from birth, was the leading *hadeeth* scholar of his time in Baḡrah. He was also a highly respected Qur'aanic exegete and Arab philologist. He died in Waasiṭ during the plague. (*Al-A'laam*, vol. 5, p. 189)  
124 Ar-Rabee' ibn Ziyaad ibn Anas al-Haarithe'e (d. 673) lived during the time

of the prophethood, but did not meet the Prophet (ﷺ) before his death. He was a successful leader of the Muslim armies during the Righteous Caliphate and was made the governor of al-Bahrain and later Sijistaan. (*Al-A'laam*, vol. 3, p. 14)

the permissible and the impermissible, and between truth and falsehood.”<sup>125</sup> This is the case because, a single matter having two major descriptions, is treated like a single matter when only a single characteristic [is mentioned], and as two matters when it has two descriptions. So much so, that if its characteristics are many, it may be treated like [many different] objects. Can you not see that the person who is good at both accounting and medicine will be treated as an accountant [on one occasion] and a doctor [on another], and the person who is good at carpentry and building will be treated like a carpenter and a builder [though they are single individuals].

Since the heart accepts remembrance of Allaah and knowledge, it functions like a container in which water may be put. The “container” is mentioned in this couplet from among various [metaphorical] names for the heart, because it can be fine and pure and it is what is carried by the beggar [when] in the position of the poor and destitute. And when [the heart] turns away from falsehood it is pure and healthy as if it were two [different containers].

According to this picture, it becomes clear that the container is not the heart when he says: “If you put your heart in other than its place,”<sup>126</sup> and you do not have with you a container in which what is desired may be placed. [In such a case] you are similar to a [poor] man who is informed that a rich man is distributing food among the people and [the rich man] had a small soup bowl that he leaves behind. When [the poor man] goes requesting for food, he is told, “Give me a container and I will give you food.”<sup>127</sup>

On the other hand, if you left your food bowl in your house and came, and you did not have another container with you for us to put the food in,<sup>128</sup> so we did not give you any, you would

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125 Ibn Katheer said the following regarding *al-Furqaan* (the Criterion):

126 The author clarified this statement saying: “Its place is the one in which remembrance of God and knowledge are put.”

127 This example is of the case where external factors prevent the heart from gaining its rights. You did not have a bowl and came, but the one giving out food left the bowl you needed behind. The environment

128 This interpretation represents a state where internal factors prevent the heart from gaining knowledge. You had a bowl and deliberately left it

return home empty-handed.<sup>129</sup>

If one [gifted] with insight reflects on the various modes of communication, he will find a good and eloquent place for this couplet in both the Arabic language and proverbs. For the opposite of this previously mentioned state is that of a heart turning towards truth, knowledge and remembrance of Allaah, while turning away from everything besides them. This is the *hanafiyyah*, the religion of Abraham<sup>130</sup> – Peace be upon him – as *hanaf* is the advance of one foot and its inclining towards the other. It is the inclination away from something while turning toward another. The *haneef* religion is the turning to Allaah alone while turning away from everything besides Him. It is “sincerity”, whose translation is the Word of Truth, the Good Word: *laa ilaaha illallaah*. O Allaah make us firm upon it in this life and the next, for there is neither movement nor power except with Allaah’s permission.<sup>131</sup>

This is the conclusion of what has come [to me] at this time [on this subject] and Allaah knows best, for **above every one with knowledge there is one more knowledgeable**.<sup>132</sup> All praise is due to Allaah, the Mighty, the Benefactor, the Kind, and the Forgiving. Allaah is sufficient for us and He is the best trustee.

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behind. Pride, desires

129 The phrase used in the original text is, “You would return with Hunayn’s pair of shoes,” which is used to indicate failure and disappointment. Al-Jawharee said: [Hunayn] was the name of a shoemaker from al-Heerah. On one occasion a Bedouin haggled with him over a pair of shoes and then he did not buy them. That infuriated the shoemaker, so he hung one the shoes [from a tree branch] on the Bedouin’s route home. Then he went further ahead and threw the other foot in [the middle of] the road, and hid himself. When the Bedouin came along and saw the shoe, he said [to himself]: “This looks just like Hunayn’s shoes! If only the other foot was with it, I would surely buy it!” When he went further ahead, he saw the other foot lying in the road. So he dismounted, tied his camel, and walked back down the road to get the first shoe. The shoemaker then made off with his camel, and he returned to his camp with Hunayn’s pair of shoes. (Quoted in *Lisaan al-Arab*, vol. , p. 133)

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### **Reasons for the heart to be right**

1. if the heart is sensitive and soft, it easily accepts knowledge, and the knowledge then becomes firmly rooted in it and [the heart] is affected by it.
2. [the heart] must be pure and healthy so that knowledge can grow and bear good fruit in it.
3. a heart turning to truth, knowledge, and remembrance of God, while turning away from everything besides them

### **Reasons for the heart to be in the wrong location:**

1. if it is not used for knowledge and it is unaware of the truth, it forgets its Lord
2. the soul becomes occupied with the temptations of this world and its bodily needs, so its desires block the heart from the truth.
3. he could be inclined towards [the truth], but [desires and material needs] block [the heart] from following the truth
4. Whims and desires can intervene before [the heart] learns the truth and block it from reflection on it.
5. due to pride that prevents it from seeking the truth
6. Whims and desires could also oppose [the heart] after it became acquainted with the truth causing it to deny [the truth] and turn away from it,
7. if it is hard and harsh it is difficult for it to accept knowledge.
8. if it accepts knowledge, and it has in it mud and filth, it will corrupt the knowledge

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

There are many books currently in circulation concerning the purification of the heart and soul. This text is a welcome addition to the Islamic English library as it takes a unique approach to the subject.

The author of this brief treatise, Ibn Taymiyyah, systematically dissects the primary role of the heart in the life of a true Muslim. After discussing the heart's purpose and function, the author discusses the prominence given to the heart in all affairs by Allah and His Prophet (pbuh) in the various texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah. He then goes on to identify the right of the heart in relationship to Allah; remembrance and consciousness of its Lord. Ibn Taymiyyah also categorized the various types of hearts that exist relative to their states and conditions and concluded his treatise with the worst state for the heart to be in, lost, along with advice on how to avoid it.

Dr. Bilal Philips has added an extensive commentary referencing verses and traditions and further elucidating the deep meanings alluded to by the author, making the final text a very enjoyable and inspiring read.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips is a Jamaican-Canadian who accepted Islam in Canada in the early 70's and thereafter systematically pursued an Islamic education which took him to the Islamic University of Madeenah, the University of Riyadh and culminated in a PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of Wales, UK.

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Dr Philips has also set up a variety of Islamic institutions like the Islamic Information Center in Dubai, the department of Islamic Studies in Preston University – Ajman and in SKC, Cotabato City, Mindanao. He has recently founded Preston College – Chennai, and the Islamic Studies Academy – Doha, Qatar. Furthermore, he is the founder and director of the Islamic Online University ([www.islamiconlineuniversity.com](http://www.islamiconlineuniversity.com)). More about him may be gleaned from his website [www.bilalphilips.com](http://www.bilalphilips.com).



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