

The Sound Heart

By Muaz Billoo

While describing the nature of the Day of Judgment, Allah ﷻ says,

“On that day, neither wealth nor children shall benefit (anyone), except for the one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.”¹

Attaining a clean heart should be from the highest aspirations of every Muslim. Without a sound heart, we find ourselves struggling to engage in the worship of Allah, turning away from the salah, preferring entertainment over the recitation of Qur'an, and our thoughts lead us to engage in immoral behaviors. Whereas with a sound heart, we find ourselves enjoying the salah, tasting the sweetness of the recitation of the Qur'an, and our thoughts gravitate around Allah ﷻ. This is as the Prophet ﷺ stated,

“Verily, there is a piece of flesh in the body; if it is sound, then the entire body will be sound. If it is corrupt, then the entire body will be corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.”²

This hadith not only holds true from a physical standpoint i.e., if we have a healthy heart, then we will likely have a healthy body, but the primary object of the hadith is to draw our attention to the spiritual state of the heart. If we keep our hearts clean and sound from vices and evils, then the rest of our limbs will also be able to remain clean from vices and evils. A heart that is clean will gravitate towards the remembrance of Allah, engaging in that which pleases Him, and shunning that which displeases Him. It is as Allah ﷻ says in the following Hadith Qudsi,

“When I love him (the servant), I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks.”³

Hafiz ibn Hajar (d. 852) writes that one possible meaning of this hadith is that the limbs of such a person will only be engaged in that which is pleasing to Allah ﷻ. He will not listen to anything except that which Allah is pleased

¹ Qur'an 26:89

² *Sahih al-Bukhari* 52

³ *Sahih al-Bukhari* 6502

with, nor will he look at anything except for that which Allah is pleased with. Another explanation put forward by Imams al-Khattabi رحمہ اللہ (d. 388) and al-Fakihani رحمہ اللہ and is that Allah will be the guardian for this person's limbs i.e., Allah will protect his limbs such that he will not be able to listen to anything except that which Allah has deemed permissible, he will not be able to look at anything except that which Allah has deemed permissible, etc.⁴

Therefore, if we can strive to attain a sound heart, we will find divine assistance from Allah to engage in more good deeds, finding greater opportunities to please Allah ﷻ. The question is: what steps can we take to attain a sound heart?

The celebrated 13th century exegete, 'Allamah Shihab al-Din Abu al-Thana Mahmud ibn 'Abdullah al-Alusi al-Baghdadi رحمہ اللہ (d. 1270) gives five explanations for a "sound heart."⁵ They are as follows,

1. He spends his wealth on righteous causes.

Spending our wealth on righteous and charitable causes is from the greatest ways of ridding ourselves from the love of this world. Imam Hasan al-Basri رحمہ اللہ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The love of this world is the source of all evil."⁶ Love of this world is from the greatest obstacles towards the path of Allah. It prevents us from preparing for death, from preparing for our meeting with Allah. We must never forget that if Allah is displeased with us – may Allah be pleased with us – then every single moment of our lives was a complete and utter waste. If we sincerely spend our wealth on righteous causes, then our wealth will be able to benefit us on the Day of Judgment.

⁴ *Fath al-Bari* 20/243-244

⁵ *Ruh al-Ma'ani* 19/223-224

⁶ *Shu'ab al-Iman* of Imam al-Baihaqi #10009. Hafiz al-Sakhawi says that the chain of narration up to Imam Hasan is sound. As for it being a *mursal* narration, bear in mind that Imam 'Ali ibn al-Madini (d. 234) said, "The *mursal* narrations of Hasan are authentic when reliable people narrate from him." Imam Abu Zur'ah al-Razi (d. 264) said, "Whenever Hasan says, 'The Prophet ﷺ said,' then I have always found a strong basis for it, with the exception of four Hadith." Unfortunately, he did not mention those four narrations. See: *al-Maqasid al-Hasanah* 1/523-524 #393.

2. He exerts himself in guiding his children towards the truth, encouraging them to do good, thereby becoming true and obedient servants of Allah ﷻ.

A sign of a truly diseased heart is that of a parent who has no concern for his/her own children. It is possible – may Allah protect us – that the father is consistently in the masjid for salah, reciting an abundance of Qur'an, and engages in all sorts of good deeds, yet he is completely oblivious to what his children are engaged in. It is possible that he is unconcerned by their spiritual and mental health. Thus, we must learn to bear patiently with children, and teach them and guide them with affection and forbearance. A great example to help us understand the relationship between father and son can be found in Surah Luqman, wherein Luqman ﷺ advises his son with priceless words. Those interested may refer to Surah Luqman in *Ma'ariful Qur'an*.

3. A heart that is free of spiritual maladies.

For example, the Prophet ﷺ was asked about the greatest form of wealth, to which he responded, “The best form (of wealth) is a tongue that is engaged in the remembrance of Allah, a heart that is grateful (to Allah), and a righteous spouse that assists the believer in his faith.”⁷ The remembrance and expression of gratitude to Allah, and a righteous companion to assist us on our journey are key components in our struggle against the carnal desires. Above all else, we need to sit in the company of the righteous scholars for a diagnosis of our spiritual maladies and their cures.

4. A heart that is free of disbelief and hypocrisy (i.e., false beliefs).

This explanation is narrated from a large contingent of early exegetes, such as the leader of all exegetes, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas ﷺ (d. 68) as well as his students, such as Imams Mujahid ﷺ (d. 104), Qatadah ﷺ (d. 117), ibn Sirin ﷺ (d. 110) and others. Ultimately, the heart which has recognized Allah ﷻ is truly valuable. This is why we cannot look down upon another Muslim. We can look down on sins and behaviors, but not on specific Muslims, as we have no idea what his status is before Allah. He may very well have a higher rank than us. The recognition of Allah is our ticket into paradise, and a heart

⁷ *Musnad Ahmad* 22392, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* 3094; declared *Hasan* by al-Tirmidhi.

that his void of His recognition has no real value. Thus, we have to ensure that we take care and value our faith so that it never falls into disbelief. The Prophet ﷺ delineates some signs of hypocrisy,

“The signs of a hypocrite are three:

- 1) When he speaks, he lies**
- 2) When he promises, he breaks that promise**
- 3) When he is entrusted, he proves to be treacherous.”⁸**

To keep our heart clean of hypocrisy, we must avoid lying, breaking promises, and violating trusts.

5. A heart that contains nothing but Allah ﷻ.

Qadi ibn ‘Atiyyah رحمه الله (d. 546) transmits this from Imam Sufyan al-Thawri رحمه الله (d. 161). A heart that has completely cleaned itself from everything but that which pleases Allah will have tasted the sweetness of Iman (faith). The Prophet ﷺ has said,

“Whoever has three qualities will find the sweetness of faith:

- 1) That Allah and His messenger are more beloved to him than anyone else**
- 2) That he loves someone only for the sake of Allah**
- 3) He despises reverting to disbelief just as he despises being thrown into the fire.”⁹**

Mulla ‘Ali al-Qari رحمه الله (d. 1014) writes, “When the sweetness of faith enters a heart, it will never leave.”¹⁰

Hafiz ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله (d. 751) writes that for one to have a sound heart, he must be free of the following five things:

1. From all forms of polytheism (*shirk*) that negate the Oneness of Allah (*tauhid*).
2. Innovations that stand opposed to the sunnah.

⁸ *Sahih al-Bukhari* 33

⁹ *Sahih al-Bukhari* 16

¹⁰ *Mirqat al-Mafatih* 1/141

3. Carnal desires that violate the command of Allah ﷻ.
4. Heedlessness that prevents one from remembering Allah ﷻ
5. Whims that negate sincerity.

He then says, “These five things serve as barriers from Allah.”¹¹

May Allah ﷻ allow us to develop a sound heart.

¹¹ As quoted from *al-Mawsu'ah al-Tafsir al-Ma'thur* 16/307