

The Diseases of the Hearts & their Cure

By Shaykhul-Islâm Ibn Taymiyah

All praise is due to Allah. We seek His help and forgiveness, and we seek refuge in Allah for the evil [inclinations] of our souls and the evil [consequences] of our actions. Whoever Allah guides, none can misguide – and whoever Allah misguides, none can guide. I testify that none is worthy of worship except Allah, alone without any partner, and I testify that Muhammad was His servant and messenger.

I – Diagnosing the Disease

Allah, the Most High, said about the hypocrites:

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَرَّادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا

In their hearts is a disease, so Allah increased their disease.¹ [al-Baqarah: 10]

لِيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلقى الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ

[That is] so He (Allah) may make what Satan throws in a trial for those within whose hearts is disease and those hard of heart.² [al-Hajj: 53]

لَئِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْمُرْجِفُونَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُغْرِبَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُونَكَ فِيهَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

If the hypocrites, those in whose hearts is disease, and those who spread rumors in Madinah do not cease, We will surely incite you against them; then they will not remain your neighbors therein except for a little.³ [al-Ahzâb: 60]

وَلَا يَرْتَابُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَلَيَقُولَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا

[So] those who were given the Scripture and the believers will not doubt and that those in whose hearts is disease and the disbelievers will say: “What does Allah intend by this as an example?”⁴
[al-Muddathir: 31]

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Also, the Most High said:

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

O mankind! There has come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the chests and guidance and mercy for the believers.¹ [Yoonus: 57]

وَنُنزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا

And We send down of the Qur'an that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss. [al-Isrâ': 82]

وَيَشْفِ صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ۝ وَيُذْهِبُ غَيْظَ قُلُوبِهِمْ

...and heal the chests of a believing people. And remove the fury of their hearts.² [at-Tawbah: 14-15]

Bodily disease is the antithesis of its health and wellbeing. It refers to a deficiency within it; that which spoils its ordinary perception and movement. Its perception may disappear [altogether] like with blindness and deafness, or it may perceive things contrary to their reality – like perceiving that which is sweet to be sour, or hallucinating things that have no reality in the tangible world.

As for its ordinary movement being spoiled, an example is losing its strength to digest [food], or detesting the nutrition that it needs, or loving the things that harm it – and it experiences pain in proportion to these [deficiencies]. Despite that, it still has not died. Rather, it retains a degree of strength by which to perform some voluntary movements, and that [disease] generates physical pain as a result of a defect in either quantity or quality.

The first is caused by either a deficiency of substance wherein it would need nutrition, or by its excess wherein it would need detoxification. The second is like intensely hot or cold temperatures, and this would [require] treatment³.

Likewise with the disease of the heart; it is deficiency that afflicts it and spoils its perception and will-power. [As for] its perception, this is by the *shubuhât* (doubts) that are presented to it until it cannot see the truth, or it sees it contrary to its reality. [As for] its will-power, this is by it hating the beneficial truth and by loving the harmful falsehood. For this reason, disease was at times interpreted to mean doubt and confusion, as Mujâhid and Qatâdah interpreted His words: **[In their hearts is a disease]** [al-Baqarah; 10] to mean: doubt – while other times it was interpreted as the *shahwah* (desire) of fornication, as was interpreted about His words: **[...lest he whose heart is diseased become hopeful]** [al-Ahzâb; 32]. For this reason as well, al-Kharâ'itî composed his book [*I'tilâl al-Quloob*] – meaning the hearts' disease – and intended by that the disease of *shahwah*.

The diseased person is bothered by that which does not harm the healthy. Thus, he is harmed by slight heat or cold, by physical exertion, or the likes of these matters which he cannot endure due to the

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disease weakening him. Generally, diseases weaken those afflicted and render their strength incapable of enduring what the strong can endure.

Also, good health is preserved by its likes and removed by its opposite, and disease is strengthened by the likes of its cause and is removed by its opposite. Therefore, if the diseased incurs the likes of what caused his disease, then his diseases intensifies and his weakness increases until perhaps he dies. If he incurs what increases his strength and removes the disease, the opposite takes places.

Similarly, the disease of the heart is a pain that occurs to the heart, like being furious from an enemy that vanquished you, for that pains the heart. Allah, the Most High, said: **[...and heal the chests of a believing people. And remove the fury of their hearts]** [at-Tawbah; 14-15]. Here, their healing was by removing the suffering which their hearts experienced, and [thus] it is said: ‘The fury of So and so was healed.’ – and: ‘In retaliation, there is a healing for the family of the murder victim.’ – and the likes. They were the remedy for the grief, fury, and sorrow which are all pains that occur within oneself.

Similarly, doubt and ignorance pain the heart. The prophet ﷺ said: **“Should they not have asked when they did not know? Indeed, the cure for ignorance is but a question.”**¹ The heart of an individual who is doubtful and hesitant regarding a matter is pained until he acquires certain knowledge. Thus, it is said about the scholar who clarifies the truth with his response: ‘He has healed me with [his] response.’

Disease is less than death; the heart dies from absolute ignorance² and becomes diseased from a shade of ignorance. Hence, it can experience death and disease as well as life and health – and its life, death, disease, and cure are greater than the body’s life, death, disease, and cure. For this reason, if the heart’s disease is subjected to a *shubhah* or *shahwah*, the disease intensifies, and when it is subjected to wisdom and exhortation, this works towards its wellbeing and cure³.

The Most High said: **[That is] so He (Allah) may make what Satan throws in a trial for those within whose hearts is disease...** – because this generates a doubt in them – **[...and those hard of heart]** [al-Hajj; 53] – due to its dryness. Their hearts were weakened by the disease, so what Satan threw became a trial for them, and the hardness of their hearts distanced them from *eemân* (faith), so it became a trial for them.

Similarly, the Most High said: **[If the hypocrites, those in whose hearts is disease, and those who spread rumors in Madinah do not cease...]** [al-Ahzâb; 60] – just as the Most High said: **[And that those in whose hearts is disease and the disbelievers will say...]**⁴ [al-Muddathir; 31]. Their hearts did not die like the death of the disbelievers and hypocrites, nor is it well and healthy like the health of the believers’ hearts. Rather, it contains the diseases of *shubhah* and *shahwah*.

Likewise, **[...lest he whose heart is diseased become hopeful]** [al-Ahzâb; 32] – refers to the disease of *shahwah*. Were the healthy heart subjected to a woman, it would not turn towards her, whereas the heart diseased with desires would turn to this when subjected to it – because of its weakness – in proportion to the strength or weakness of the disease. For that reason, when she is soft in speech, he whose heart is diseased becomes hopeful⁵.

¹ Narrated by Abu Dâwud in [as-Sunan] (336), and al-Albâni deemed it *Hasan* without the statement: ‘It would have been sufficient for him...’ in [Saḥeeḥ Abu Dâwud] (335).

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II – The Qur’an is a Remedy

The Qur’an is a remedy for what is in the chests. Whoever’s heart contains the diseases of doubts and desires, it (the Qur’an) contains the clear proofs that distinguish truth from falsehood¹. It removes the disease of doubt which spoils knowledge, perception, and realization – whereby he can see things as they actually are. It contains wisdom, excellent exhortation via encouraging [good] and frightening [from evil], and stories which contain lessons that promote health in the heart. As a result, the heart becomes inclined to what brings it benefit and disinclined from what brings it harm. After desiring deviance and detesting guidance, the heart now loves guidance and detests deviance.

Therefore, the Qur’an removes the diseases which evoke corrupt desires. This purifies the heart, which in turn purifies its desire, and consequently returns it to its *fitrah* (natural state) upon which it was disposed – just as the body returns to its normal state.

III – Nourishing the Heart

The heart is nourished with what purifies and strengthens it through *eemân* and the Qur’an, just as the body is nourished through what strengthens and develops it – for the purification of the heart is like the development of the body².

Linguistically, *zakâh* means development and growing healthily. It is said: ‘The matter underwent *zakâh*...’ – when it has grown healthily. The heart requires nourishment in order to develop, become healthy, and complete³ – just as the body requires being nourished with that which benefits it. Alongside that, that which harms it must be guarded against. Therefore, the body does not develop without being given what benefits it and safeguarded against what harms it. Likewise with the heart; it does not become purified, grow, and reach full health without acquiring what benefits it and repelling what harms it. Likewise with plants; they do not develop without this⁴.

Since *sadaqa* (charity) extinguishes the sins just as water extinguishes fire⁵, the heart undergoes *zakâh* through it, and its *zakâh* is beyond [merely] being purified from sin⁶. Allah, the Most High, said:

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا

Take [O Muhammad] from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them *zakâh* (increase)... [at-Tawbah: 103]

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⁵ Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (2616), Ahmad (15319), and al-Albâni deemed it authentic in [*Saheeh* al-Jâmi‘] (5136). The wording [here] is that of at-Tirmidhi, on the authority of Mu‘âdh ibn Jabal (ra).

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As well, abandoning immorality and sin purify the heart, for these are comparable to toxins in the body and weeds in plants. Once the body is detoxified of these foul substances – like draining excess blood – then the body can rest, retrieve its original strength, and thereby grow. Likewise, once one repents from the sins, this detoxifies his [contaminated] mixture – for he has mixed between righteous acts and others that were wicked. So when one repents from [his] sins, the heart’s strength and will-power to perform righteous acts is liberated, and the heart finds rests from the detrimental effects that were inside of it. Therefore, the *zakâh* of the heart involves its growth and completeness. The Most High said:

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَايَ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا

And if not for the bounty of Allah upon you and His mercy, none of you would have *zakâ* (become pure).¹ [an-Noor: 21]

وَإِنْ قِيلَ لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَأَرْجِعُوا ۗ هُوَ أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ

And if it is said to you: ‘Go back.’ – then go back; it is *azkâ* (purer) for you.² [an-Noor: 28]

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

Tell the believing men to reduce from their gaze and guard their private parts. That is *azkâ* (purer) for them. Indeed, Allah is fully informed about what they do.³ [an-Noor: 30]

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ ۖ وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّىٰ

He has certainly succeeded who *tazakkâ* (purifies himself). And mentions the name of his Lord and prays. [al-A‘lâ: 14-15]

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

He has certainly succeeded who *zakkâha* (purifies it). And he has certainly failed who buries it [into corruption].⁴ [ash-Shams: 9-10]

وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَكَّىٰ

But what would make you perceive [O Muhammad] that perhaps he may *yazzakkâ* (become purified).¹ [‘Abasa: 3]

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فَقُلْ هَلْ لَكَ إِلَىٰ أَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ ۖ وَأَهْدِيكَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَتَخْشَىٰ

And say [to Fir‘awn]: ‘Would you [be willing to] tazakkâ (purify yourself)? And let me guide you to your Lord so you would fear [Him]?’ [an-Nâzi‘ât: 18-19]

Even though the basis of *tazkiyah* is growth, blessing, and an increase in goodness, it can only be attained by removing the evil. For this reason, *tazkiyah* was inclusive of both this and that, and thus He (st) said:

وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُشْرِكِينَ ۖ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ

And woe to those who associate [others with Allah] – those who do not fulfill zakâh...² [Fussilat: 6-7]

Zakâh here refers to the *tawheed* and *eamân* which nourish the heart, for they involve denying the divinity of anyone but *al-Haqq* (Allah) from the heart, and [then] by affirming the divinity of *al-Haqq* in that heart. This is the reality of *Lâ Elâha Illâ Allâh* which is the basis upon which the hearts become nourished.

Tazkiyyah is the act of deeming something pure, whether intrinsically or in belief and perception, just one says: ‘*Addaltuh* (I deemed him credible).’ – when he deemed him credible in actuality, or in the perception of the people. The Most High said:

فَلَا تَزْكُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ ۖ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ

So do not Tuzakku (deem pure) yourselves. [an-Najm: 32]

This means: do not claim its purity³. This is other than His statement: **[He has certainly succeeded who zakkâha (purifies it).]**⁴ [ash-Shams: 9] – and that is why He said [in the former]:

هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ

He is most knowing of who fears Him. [an-Najm: 32]

The name of Zaynab (rah) used to be Barraah, and it was said that she was claiming purity to herself, so the messenger of Allah ﷺ named her Zaynab⁵.

As for His statement:

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⁵ Collected by al-Bukhâri (5839), Muslim (2141), and Ibn Mâjah (3732).

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُزَكُّونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ^١ بَلِ اللَّهُ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ

Have you not seen those who *Yuzakkoon* (deem purity) of themselves? Rather, Allah purifies whom He wills... [an-Nisâ': 49]

This means they consider it pure and inform of its purity¹, just as someone who qualifies a witness and informs of him being '*adl* (credible).

IV – Between Justice and Oppression

'*Adl* (justice) entails uprightness, and uprightness entails the soundness of the heart – just as *dhulm* (oppression) entails its corruption. For this reason, every sin involves a man being a *dhâlim* (oppressor) to himself². The opposite of *dhulm* is '*adl*, and hence [the sinner] has not been '*adl* with himself, rather he has oppressed it.

Therefore, the soundness of heart lies in '*adl* and its corruption lies in *dhulm*. Also, when the slave oppresses himself, he is the oppressor and the oppressed. Likewise, when he is just and upright, then he is the performer and recipient of that justice. This is because the action originates from him, and upon him returns the fruit of that action, whether it is good or evil. The Most High said:

لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ^٣

It will have what [good] it has gained, and it will bear what [evil] it has earned. [al-Baqarah: 286]

Actions affect the heart – whether its benefit, harm, or health – before affecting the external body, and hence their soundness is justice to it and their corruption is an oppression of it³. The Most High said:

مَنْ عَمِلْ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ^٤ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا

Whoever does righteousness – it is for his [own] soul; and whoever does evil – it is against it. [Fussilat: 46]

إِن أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لَأَنفُسِكُمْ^٥ وَإِن أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا^٦

If you do good, you do good for yourselves; and if you do evil, then it is to them (yourselves). [al-Isrâ': 7]

One of the *salaf* (predecessors) said: “A good deed generates light in the heart⁴, strength in the body¹, brightness in the face, expanse in sustenance, and love in the hearts of the creation. An evil deed

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causes darkness in the heart, blackness in the face, weakness in the body, decrease in sustenance, and hatred in the hearts of the creation.”

The Most High said:

كُلُّ أَمْرِي بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِينٌ

Every person, by what he has earned, is kept hostage. [at-Toor: 21]

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ

Every soul, for what it has earned, will be kept hostage. [al-Muddathir: 38]

وَذَكِّرْ بِهِ أَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ وَإِنْ تَعَدَلَ كُلَّ عَدَلٍ لَّا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا

But remind with it (the Qur’an), lest a soul be taken captive due to what it earned; it will have other than Allah no protector and no intercessor. And if it should offer every ransom, it would not be taken from it. Those are the ones who are taken captive due to what they have earned.

[al-An‘âm: 70]

Tubsal [in this verse] means to be taken hostage, to be imprisoned, or to be captured.

Furthermore, when the body returns to health from a disease, it is said: ‘His temperament has become upright.’ – because disease is but the displacement of temperament – even though complete uprightness which is void of blemish cannot be attained, but what is most ideal should still be sought.

The likes of this applies to the heart; its health lies in *‘adl* and its disease lies in deviance and *dhulm*. Surely, absolute *‘adl* in all matters is impossible, and this is known factually and through experience, but what is *amthal* (most ideal) should still be sought. This is what is intended by one saying: This is *amthal*.’ – and is the intent behind saying that the *salafi* methodology is the path which is *al-muthlâ*. The Most High said:

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ

And you will never be able to be equal [in feeling] between wives, even if you should strive [to do so]. [an-Nisâ’: 129]

وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

And give full measure and weight in justice. We do not charge any soul except [with that within] its capacity. [al-An‘âm: 152]

Allah, the Most High, sent the messengers and revealed the books so that the people may uphold justice, and the greatest justice is worshipping Allah alone without any partner, and then upholding *‘adl*

regarding the rights of humanity, and then upholding 'adl with yourself. *Dhulm* is also three types¹, and they are all from the diseases of the hearts, and [only] 'adl entails its soundness and health.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal said to an individual: 'If you were healthy, you would not have feared anyone.' In other words, your fear of the creation is from a disease within you, such as the disease of *shirk* and sin.

V – The Heart's Life & Illumination

Essentially, the soundness of the heart is its life and its illumination. The Most High said:

أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا

And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?² [al-An'âm: 122]

For this reason, Allah mentions the life of the hearts and their brightness, and their death and their darkness, in several places. For instance, He (st) said:

لِيُنذِرَ مَن كَانَ حَيًّا وَيَحِقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ

To warn whoever is alive and justify the word (i.e. decree) against the disbelievers.³ [YâSeen: 70]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ^ط وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life, and know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart, and that to Him you shall all be gathered.⁴ [al-Anfâl: 24]

Similarly, He (st) said:

يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ

He brings the living out of the dead and brings the dead out of the living. [ar-Room: 19]

... and of its types is bringing forth a believer from a disbeliever, and bringing forth a disbeliever from a believer⁵.

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the absence of *eemân* and knowledge. Its victim is surrounded by darkneses, some of them atop others, wherein he cannot see anything since [true] vision is only via the light of *eemân* and knowledge.

The Most High said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ

Indeed, those who fear [Allah] – when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember [Him] and at once they have insight.¹ [al-A‘râf: 201]

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ ^{هط} وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَنَّ رَأَىٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ

And she certainly sought him, and he would have sought her – had he not seen the proof of his Lord.² [Yoosuf: 24]

This proof was the *eemân* that manifested in his heart. Because of it, Allah removed what he [initially] sought, wrote a complete good deed for him, and did not write a bad deed against him – for he performed a good deed, and did not commit any sin.

The Most High said:

لَتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

...that you [O Muhammad] may bring people out from the darkneses into the light... [Ibrâheem: 1]

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ

Allah is the Guardian of those who believe. He brings them out from darkneses into the light. And those who disbelieve – their allies are the false gods. They take them out from the light into darkneses. [al-Baqarah: 257]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِن رَّحْمَتِهِ وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ

O you who have believed, fear Allah and believe in His Messenger; He will [then] give you a double portion of His mercy and make for you a light by which you will walk... [al-Hadeed: 28]

For this reason, Allah struck two examples for the believers; an example with the water which sustains life and the foam that comes with it, and an example with the fire which generates light and the foam that comes with that which boils upon it. Likewise, Allah struck two examples for the hypocrites. The Most High said [regarding the believers]:

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أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا ۚ وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلَهُ ۗ
 كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ ۗ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً ۗ وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ

He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is foam like it. Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. In this manner Allah presents the examples.¹ [ar-Ra‘d: 17]

Regarding the hypocrites, the Most High said:

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ۝ صُمُّ بَكْمٌ عُمِي فَمَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ۝ أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ۝ يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ ۗ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Their example is that of one who kindled a fire, but when it illuminated what was around him, Allah took away their light and left them in darkness [so] they could not see. Deaf, dumb and blind - so they will not return [to the right path]. Or [it is] like a rainstorm from the sky within which is darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps in dread of death. But Allah is encompassing of the disbelievers. The lightning almost snatches away their sight. Every time it lights [the way] for them, they walk therein; but when darkness comes over them, they stand [still]. And if Allah had willed, He could have taken away their hearing and their sight. Indeed, Allah is over all things capable.² [al-Baqarah 17-20]

Regarding them, the [first] example was struck of someone who kindled a fire, but whenever it illuminated, Allah extinguished it. The [second] example was that of water which descends from the sky, but it came with darknesses, thunder, and lightning which allows visibility. The detailed explanation of these examples belongs elsewhere, whereas the objective here is to allude to the light of the hearts and their illumination.

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There occurs in the narration [prophetic] supplication: **“Make the Qur’an the *rabee*’ (nourishment) of our hearts, and the light of our chests.”**¹ The *rabee*’ is the rain which descends from the sky and causes the vegetation to sprout.² The prophet (saws) said: **“Indeed, of that which the *rabee*’ causes to sprout kills or nearly [kills].”**³⁴ The season when the first rainfall descends was named *ar-Rabee*’ (Spring) by the Arabs due to the rain that falls during it and produces vegetation, and others gave the name *ar-Rabee*’ to the season following winter (pre-Spring), for in it the flowers blossom to [later] develop into fruits, and the leaves begin growing on the trees.

Due to the light it contains, this alive and illuminated heart hears, sees, and understands. As for the dead heart, it neither hears nor sees. The Most High said:

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً ۗ صُمُّ بَكْمٌ عُمِّيُّ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries (i.e. cattle or sheep) - deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.⁵ [al-Baqarah: 171]

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ ۗ أَفَأَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ۝ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْكَ ۗ أَفَأَنْتَ تُهْدِي الْعُمِّيَّ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يُبْصِرُونَ

And among them are those who listen to you. But can you cause the deaf to hear, although they will not use reason? And among them are those who look at you. But can you guide the blind although they will not [attempt to] see?⁶ [Yoonus: 42-43]

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ ۗ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۗ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كُلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا ۗ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوكَ يُجَادِلُونَكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

And among them are those who listen to you, but We have placed over their hearts coverings, lest they understand it, and in their ears deafness. And if they should see every sign, they will not believe in it. Even when they come to you arguing with you, those who disbelieve say, "This is not but legends of the former peoples."⁷ [al-An‘âm: 25]

¹ Collected by Ahmad (1877), Ibn Hibbân (972), at-Tabarâni in [al-Kabeer] (270, 10352), and al-Albâni deemed it authentic in [Saheeh at-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb] (1822).

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³ Collected by Muslim (1052), Ibn Mâjah (3995), and Ibn Hibbân (3227).

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Here, He (st) informed that they do not understand with their hearts, nor hear with their ears, nor believe in the Fire which they have seen, just as He (st) informed about them saying:

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكْثَةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَمِنْ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنَكَ حِجَابٌ

And they say, "Our hearts are within coverings from that to which you invite us, and in our ears is deafness, and between us and you is a partition..."¹ [Fussilat: 5]

They mentioned the impediments upon the hearts, hearings, and sights – even though their bodies were alive and able to hear sounds and see individuals – but the life of the body, without the life of the heart, is identical to the life of the beasts; they have hearing and sight, and they eat, drink, and copulate. For this reason, the Most High said: [The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries...] [al-Baqarah: 171] He compared them to the sheep whom the shepherd shouts at while they hear nothing but [unintelligible] calls and cries, just as He said in the other verses:

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ ۚ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا

Or do you think that most of them hear or reason? They are not except like livestock. Rather, they are [even] more astray in [their] way. [al-Furqân: 44]

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ

And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. [al-A‘râf: 179]