

The Heart is the Home of All Good

"Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allaah."

[Az-Zumar 39:22]

They are in obvious misguidance. Woe to those whose hearts hear the Qur'aan and they do not become fearful and humbled as a result of it. Woe to those whose eyes are reminded of the Words of Allaah, but they do not weep in fear of Him. Woe to those who are reminded of the Warnings of Allaah and they do not humble themselves to His Words.

Concerning the importance of the heart, the Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

"There is in the body a lump of flesh - if it becomes good, the whole body becomes good and if it becomes bad, the whole body becomes bad. And indeed it is the heart."

[Bukhaaree]

The hadeeth in full:- *'Both legal and illegal things are evident but in between them there are doubtful (suspicious) things and most of the people have no knowledge about them. So whoever saves himself from these suspicious things saves his religion and his honour. And whoever indulges in these suspicious things is like a shepherd who grazes (his animals) near the Hima (private pasture) of someone else and at any moment he is liable to get in it. (O people!) Beware! Every king has a Hima and the Hima of Allaah on the earth is His illegal (forbidden) things. Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart.'*

[Bukhaaree]

He (saw) begins the hadeeth by first explaining that the halaal is clear and that the haraam is clear and that between them are obscure, grey areas. However, what protects a person from the haraam and ensures that he remains in the halaal is knowledge; but beyond knowledge, it is the state of the heart. If the heart is good, then it makes use of the knowledge and it avoids what is prohibited. If the heart is bad, then the knowledge is of no benefit to it and it will indulge in what is prohibited.

During the last pilgrimage, the Prophet (saw) informed us there is no superiority of Arabs over non-Arabs; nor is there any superiority of White over Black, but that superiority in the sight of Allaah, is with those who fear Him, those who have taqwa. After bearing witness to that, he said *"Taqwa is in the heart."*

From these statements and other similar statements, we learn there is a great emphasis and importance placed on the heart. The heart is the part of the body which Allaah has favoured over all other parts. It is the place of eemaan, which is the most valuable thing that a human being can have. There is nothing more valuable. It is the determination, ultimately, of those who have belief in Allaah - those who have accepted the message and who have chosen Paradise over Hell. It is the distinction of those who have belief and those who have disbelief.

It is the heart by which the correctness of deeds are judged. He (saw) said: *"Deeds are judged according to the intention"*. The place of the intention is not on the lips. It is in the heart:

The hadeeth in full:- Allaah's Apostle (saw) said,

"The reward of deeds depends upon the intention and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So whoever emigrated for Allaah and His Apostle, then his emigration was for Allaah and His Apostle. And whoever emigrated for worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, his emigration was for what he emigrated for." [Bukhaaree]

Our deeds - what we do externally - are judged ultimately by the states of our hearts. Allaah will inspect the hearts to determine whether our deeds were truly acts of righteousness.

The Prophet (saw) informed us that the first 3 people to be cast into the Fire are people who were involved in what everybody considers great acts of righteousness. They are the scholar who taught knowledge; the wealthy person who gave from his wealth in charity and the martyr who gave his life fighting in the path of God.

The Prophet (saw) said that they would be among the first groups of people thrown into the Fire. This is because the scholar did not teach the knowledge that Allaah gave him for the sake of Allaah. He taught so that people would praise him, saying what a great scholar he was and how knowledgeable he was. Allaah will say to him: You received your praise, what you sought in that world. But there will be nothing for you in the next. So he will be dragged away by his face and thrown into Hell.

Similarly with the rich person. He gave and people praised his generosity, but Allaah will say, You did it for the praise and you were praised. There was no sincerity there; it was not for the sake of Allaah. You did it for as long as people appreciated it, but when people did not pay you mind, you were not generous anymore. Your generosity was conditional; it was not for the sake of Allaah. So that individual will be dragged away by his face and thrown into Hell.

And the martyr. We would think his place in Paradise is guaranteed. But Allaah will say: You fought so people would say, 'How brave this one is! How strong and courageous he was! People said it; they praised him, but he did not do it for the sake of Allaah, so he will be dragged away by his face and thrown into Hell. [Muslim]

Even the greatest of deeds can be of no avail if the hearts are sick; if the hearts are corrupt. We must constantly be aware of the state of our heart. When the Prophet (saw) described Abu Bakr (ra), explaining his status over the rest of the people, he said, "He does not surpass you by performing more prayers and fasts - there are among you those who pray and fast more - but by something which has deeply embedded itself in his heart. Eeman is in his heart."

Ibn Mubarak (rh) said, "Many a big deed becomes small due to its intention, & many a small deed becomes big due to its intention....."

There is no other faculty in the human body that a believer should be more concerned about. We have to make sure this faculty is functioning as Allaah wishes it to function. The Prophet (saw) used to make du'aa often, beginning: "I seek refuge in you, O Allaah, from knowledge that does not benefit and from a heart which does not fear".

Softness of the Prophet's Heart

The Prophet (saw) had a very soft heart. He was known for his gentleness. His wives said they could not recall an incident where he hit them or scolded them harshly. Allaah confirmed that this quality is an essential quality. Allaah said:

"Due to Allaah's mercy, you are gentle with them. Had you been severe and harsh hearted, they would have fled from around you." [Ali-Imran 3:159]

This was the quality of the Prophets, a quality we must all aspire to, for it is fundamental to our good manners. It is essential for those who seek to guide others to Allaah; it is essential for those who seek knowledge; It is essential for parents, with regard to their children; it is essential for all people.

With regards to children, 'A'ishah (ra) reported that there came a few desert Arabs to Allaah's Messenger (saw) and said: Do you kiss your children? He said: Yes. Thereupon they said: By Allah but we do not kiss our children. Thereupon Allaah's Messenger (saw) said: Then what can I do if Allaah has deprived you of mercy? [Muslim]

Abu Hurayrah (ra) reported that al-Aqra' bin Habis saw Allaah's Apostle (saw) kissing Hasan. He said: "I have ten children, but I have never kissed any one of them", whereupon Allaah's Messenger (saw) said: "He who does not show mercy (towards his children), no mercy would be shown to him". [Muslim]

Mercy is something that we cannot live without.

Knowledge is Useless Without a Soft Heart

The reality for those seeking knowledge is that if there is not, along with that knowledge, a soft heart, then we cannot taste the beauty of that knowledge. Hassan Al-Basri (rh) said,

"If a man seeks knowledge, it will appear in his face, hands and tongue and in his humility to Allaah."

The opposite is true - that nothing corrupts knowledge more than the harshness of the heart. Where hearts have become hardened, the knowledge is of no benefit to the individual, nor can that individual benefit others with it. Softness of the heart is the characteristic of true Muslims. If it becomes absent, then a person's life is filled with distress and discomfort. This is the promise of Allaah. Those who lack soft hearts will lead woeful lives.

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It is a curse to have a hardened heart and it is a blessing to have a soft heart. Those with hardened hearts suffer in this life, even though they may have all of the trappings of this life. What seems to be an enjoyable life is empty - it is filled with loneliness. They cannot find peace of mind and of heart because their hearts are hardened to Allaah, to belief in Allaah and to submission to Allaah.

That is why Allaah said, **"Whoever turns away from my remembrance will have a wretched life."** [Ta-Ha 20:124]

"Whosoever turns away from My Message, verily for him is a life narrowed down, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgement." It is only with the remembrance of Allaah that hearts find rest. [ar-Ra'ad 13:28]