

Therefore the one whose heart is described as *salīm* is characterised so because this attribute of truthfulness and soundness has become its constant and established quality. In this respect it is like the terms, ‘the one who knows’ (*‘alīm*) and ‘the one who has power’ (*qadīr*).

It is also the opposite of diseased (*marīḍ*), sick (*saqīm*) and ailing (*‘alīl*).

People have described the sound and truthful heart in different ways. However they all revolve around the following basic concept,

[The truthful and sound heart] is that which is secure from every carnal desire that opposes the order and prohibition of Allāh. It is secure from every doubt and uncertainty that would obscure or go against His narrative. It is secure from displaying servitude to any other than Him; just as it is secure from seeking ruling from any other than His Messenger (ﷺ). Therefore it becomes sound through loving Allāh and seeking the ruling of His Messenger. It becomes sound through showing Him fear, hope, trust and reliance, penitence, and humility; it prefers what pleases Him in every circumstance and distances itself from everything that would displease Him in every possible way. This is the reality of servitude (*‘ubūdiyyah*) which can only be directed to Allāh Alone.

Therefore the truthful and sound heart is that heart which is secure from committing any form of *shirk* whatsoever and instead its servitude is directed only to, and purely for, Allāh, Exalted is He. Its desire, love, trust and reliance, penitence, humility, fear and hope is only for Allāh and its actions are purely

for His sake. Hence if it loves, it loves for the sake of Allāh; if it hates, it hates for the sake of Allāh; if it gives, it gives for the sake of Allāh; and if it withholds, it withholds for the sake of Allāh.

But this alone does not suffice until the heart becomes secure from submitting to, and going to anybody else but, the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) for judgement. Therefore the heart ties a firm bond with him (ﷺ), resolving to follow him and obey him alone in sayings and actions. These sayings comprise the saying of the heart: the matters of belief; and the sayings of the tongue which convey what the heart contains. These actions comprise the actions of the heart: its desire, love, dislike and other connected matters; and the actions of the limbs.

Therefore the judge for all these matters - the major and minor of them - is that which the Messenger (ﷺ) came with. Hence the heart does not put itself before him in any matter related to belief, saying, or action. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا لَا تَقْدِمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَيِّ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهِۦ ۚ وَانْقُوْا لِلّٰهِ
 ۝۱۰۰ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٠﴾

O you who believe! Do not put yourself forward in front of Allāh and His Messenger...

[*Al-Hujurat* (49): 1]

meaning: do not speak of a matter until he has spoken of it and do not act until he has commanded it.

Some of the *Salaf* said,

There is no action, even if it be small,

except that two records will be unfurled for it:
why? how?

meaning: why did you do it? How did you do it?

The first question enquires about the cause, onset and motive of the action. Was it done for some temporal and worldly gain such as attaining the praise of people? Was it done for fear of people's censure? Or was the motivation of this action establishing the rights of servitude, seeking the increase of ones love of, and closeness, to Allāh, Glorious and Exalted is He, and seeking the means of drawing close (*wasīlah*) to Him?

The essence of this question is: was it upon you to perform this action for the sake of your Master or for the sake of personal gain and base desire?

The second question enquires about the following of the Messenger (ﷺ) in that action of worship: was the action you did from those actions which have been legislated upon the tongue of My Messenger? Or was it an action that I did not legislate and was not pleased with?

Therefore the first question concerns sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and the second concerns following (*mutāba'ah*). Allāh does not accept any action until both these pre-requisites are met.

The method of absolution from the first question is to purify ones sincerity such that it is for Allāh Alone.

The method of absolution from the second question is to actualise the following of the Messenger (ﷺ) and by securing the heart from any intent that would impair its sincerity and any base desire that would impair its following.

This is the reality of the sound and truthful heart from which ensues victory and bliss.

The Dead Heart

This is the heart that contains no life. It does not know its Lord and it does not worship Him by complying to His command and doing that which He loves and is pleased with. Instead it is a slave to its carnal desires, temptations, and pleasures; oblivious of, and indifferent to whether they lead to the displeasure of its Lord and His anger or not. Therefore it worships other than Allāh: it directs its love, hope, pleasure, displeasure, glorification, and submission to other than Him. If it loves, it loves for the sake of its base desires; if it hates, it hates for the sake of its base desires; if it gives, it gives for the sake of its base desires; if it withholds, it withholds for the sake of its base desires. It gives preference to its base desires and these are more beloved to it than the pleasure of its Master.

Base desires are its leader, carnal desires are its commander, ignorance is its driving force, and negligence is the vessel upon which it embarks. It is completely engrossed in pursuing its worldly desires. It is driven wild by the intoxication of its base desires and love of temporal things. It hears the call to Allāh and the Abode of the Hereafter from a distant place and does not respond to the sincere advisor. It follows every cunning devil and the world is the cause of its anger and its pleasure. Base desires have deafened it and blinded it to anything other than falsehood. In this world it is like that which is said concerning Laylā,

An enemy to whosoever she displays enmity
and at peace with those she likes
Whosoever she draws close to,

he loves and draws close to.

Mixing with the person who has this heart is a sickness, interacting with him is poison, and sitting with him is ruin.

The Diseased Heart

This is the heart that contains life but also possesses a defect. It has two impulses calling it: one leading it to life and the other leading it to death; and it follows whichever of the two that predominates.

It contains love of Allāh, Exalted is He, faith in Him, sincerity to Him, and trust and reliance upon him: those matters that are essential to its life.

It also contains the love of its carnal desires, giving preference to them, and eagerness to attain them. It contains jealousy, arrogance, self-amazement, and love of ranking through attaining leadership: those matters that necessarily lead to its destruction and ruin.

It is constantly being tried by two callers: one calling it to Allāh, His Messenger, and the Abode of the Hereafter; and the other calling it to temporal, worldly matters. It responds to the one that is closest and most influential at the time.

Therefore the first type of heart is the living, humble, soft, attentive and heedful heart. The second type is the brittle, dry, and dead heart. The third type is the diseased heart, either it is closer to its salvation or it is closer to its devastation.

Allāh, the Glorious, has mentioned these types of the hearts

in His saying,

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى
 أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ
 ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ ءَايَاتِهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٢﴾ لِيَجْعَلَ
 مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْقَاسِيَةِ
 قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَلِيَعْلَمَ
 الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ
 فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ
 مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

Never did We send a Messenger or a Prophet before you without Shayṭān insinuating something into his recitation while he was reciting. But Allāh revokes whatever Shayṭān insinuates and the Allāh confirms His Signs, Allāh is All-Knowing, All-Wise. That He may make what Shayṭān insinuates a trial for those in whose heart is a disease and whose hearts are hardened. Indeed the wrongdoers are entrenched in hostility. And that those who have been given knowledge may know that it [the Qur'ān] is the truth from your Lord, that they may believe therein and their hearts may submit to it with humility. Indeed Allāh is the Guide of those who believe, to the Straight Path.

[Al-Hajj (22): 52-54]

In these three verses, Allāh, Glorious and Exalted is He, has mentioned two types of hearts put to trial and one type that is victorious. The two types of heart that are put to trial are the

diseased and the harsh heart. The victorious heart is the heart of the believer that is humble before its Lord; it is at rest and satisfied with Him, submissive and obedient to Him.

It is desired of the heart and other limbs that they be healthy and sound, having no defect so that they can do that which agrees to their nature and fulfil the purpose for which they were created. The hearts' stepping outside the bounds of steadfastness in obedience (*istiqāmah*) could either be due to its dryness and harshness, or the absence of doing that which is desired of it. In this respect it is like a mute tongue or an eye that cannot see, or only partially see, due to some form of illness or defect.

This is why the hearts have been classified into three types:

1. The healthy and sound heart which contains no impediment preventing it from accepting the truth, loving it, and giving it preference other than its coming to know of it. Therefore its comprehension of the truth is correct and it accepts it with complete submission.
2. The dead, harsh and dry heart that does not accept the truth nor submit to it.
3. The diseased heart, when its disease predominates, it joins the ranks of the dead and harsh heart; but if its soundness predominates, it joins the ranks of the truthful and sound heart.

Anything that is directed to the person by Shayṭān such as his making him hear certain words, or suggests to the heart such as suspicion and doubt acts as a trial for the latter two types of hearts and serves to further strengthen the living, truthful and sound heart.

This is because the living heart rejects all of this, dislikes it,

and is angered by it for it knows that the truth opposes it. Therefore it submits to the truth and is content with it. It knows the fallacy of that which Shayṭān has tempted it with and therefore increases with respect to its certainty of the truth, its love of it, and its rejection of falsehood.

However the heart put to trial remains in doubt and dispute concerning what was directed to it by Shayṭān. The healthy and sound heart, on the other hand, is not harmed by what Shayṭān directs to it.

Hudhyafah bin al-Yamān said that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, “Trials and tribulation will be presented to the heart [one after another] in the same way that the mat is knitted together, reed by reed. Any heart that accepts them will have a black spot form on it. Any heart that rejects them will have a white spot put on it until the hearts end up being one of two types: a black heart, murky and like an overturned vessel, it does not know the good and does not reject the evil, all it knows is its base desires; and a white heart which will not be harmed by trials for as long as the heavens and the earth remain.”²

Hence he likened the onset of trials upon the heart to knotting the reeds of a mat, one after the other.

He divided the hearts into two types based on how they react to these trials:

1. A heart that infuses trials when exposed to them in the same way that a sponge soaks in water. Therefore it has a black spot form on it, and it will keep on accepting these trials until it becomes totally black and inverted. This is the mean-

² Muslim.

ing of his saying, 'like an overturned vessel' i.e. inverted. Then when it becomes black and inverted, it is subjugated to the following two dangerous diseases that push it to destruction:

- a. Its confusion of good and evil such that it does not know the good or reject the evil. It is also possible that its disease dupe a person into believing good to be evil, evil to be good, *Sunnah* to be *bid'ah*, *bid'ah* to be *Sunnah*, truth to be falsehood, and falsehood to be truth.
 - b. Its giving precedence to its base desires when seeking judgement rather than that which the Messenger (ﷺ) came with, its yielding to them, and following them.
2. A white heart that has been set ablaze with the light of faith and its niche has been illuminated. When a trial is presented to it, it rejects it and repels it and hence its light, blaze, and strength increase.

The trials that are presented to the hearts are the causes of its disease. They are the trials of carnal desires and doubts, the trials of aimless wandering and misguidance, the trials of sins and innovations, and the trials of oppression and ignorance. The first type³ lead to the corruption of desire and intent and the second type⁴ lead to the corruption of knowledge and belief.

The Companions (may Allāh be pleased with them) divided the hearts into four categories as is authentically reported from Hudhayfah bin al-Yamān, "The hearts are of four types: The heart that has exclusively been illuminated by a blazing torch and that is the heart of the believer; the heart that is encased and that is

³ carnal desires

⁴ doubts

the heart of the disbeliever; the heart that is inverted and that is the heart of the hypocrite - he knew only to reject, and he saw only to become blind; and the heart that has two impulses: an impulse calling it to faith and an impulse calling it to hypocrisy: it belongs to the impulse that is most prominent.⁵

The meaning of his saying, ‘a heart that has exclusively...’ means a heart that has detached itself of everything besides Allāh and His Messenger. Therefore it has separated and secured itself from everything save the truth.

The meaning of his saying, ‘illuminated by a blazing torch’ refers to the niche of faith. Therefore he indicated by his words, ‘that has exclusively...’ that is secure from false doubts and misguiding carnal desires. He indicated by his words, ‘a blazing torch’ that it was set ablaze and illuminated by the light of knowledge and faith.

The ‘encased heart’ refers to the heart of the disbeliever because it is wrapped by a veil and covering and hence the light of knowledge and faith cannot reach it. This is as Allāh said, relating from the Jews that,

وَقَالُوا أَفَلَوْنَا غُلِّفُ

They say: our hearts are wrapped...

[*Al-Baqarah* (2): 88]

This veil is the covering that Allāh has placed on their hearts by way of punishment for their rejecting the truth and being too arrogant to accept it. Therefore it is a covering upon the hearts, a seal for the ears, and blindness for the eyes. This is the obscuring screen upon the eyes talked about in His saying,

⁵ Reported by ibn Abī Shaybah, *al-Īmān* [p. 17] and others with a ṣaḥīḥ isnād.