Chastity

Selections from Ibn al-Qayyim's Rawdat al-Muhibbin

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah
d. 751 AH

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Editor's Preface

Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, known as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (691–751 AH), was a scholar of Damascus and the student of Ibn Taymiyyah. His *Rawdat al-Muhibbin wa-Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin* (The Garden of the Lovers and the Delight of the Yearning) is a book of twenty-nine chapters on love: its names, its causes, its praise and its censure, lawful union and the unlawful, and, at its summit, the love of Allah.

This booklet draws on four of its chapters, kept in the book's order:

- Chapter Twenty-Three: On the Chastity of Lovers with Their Beloveds; - Chapter Twenty-Four: On Taking the Path of the Unlawful and What It Leads To of Corruptions and Pains; - Chapter Twenty-Seven: On the One Who Left His Beloved as Forbidden, So a Lawful One Was Given in Exchange for Him, or Allah Compensated Him with Better Than Him; - Chapter Twenty-Eight: On the One Who Preferred Immediate Punishment and Pains over the Pleasure of Forbidden Union.

The reader will find the verses of the Qur'an and the hadith that he gathers on chastity, his words on the chastity of Yusuf عليه السلام, a few of the reports of chaste men and women that he relates, with his comment on them, his account of the harms of the unlawful path, and the reports of those whom Allah compensated for what they left for His sake.

The text is Ibn al-Qayyim's own, abridged by selection. Cuts are shown by "...". The full translation gives the complete text.

◆ *Those who guard their chastity, and the chastity of Yusuf* ◆

Allah تعالى said: ﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ فِى صَلَاتِهِمْ خَـٰشِعُونَ وَٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ ٱللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ وَٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَوٰةِ فَـٰعِلُونَ وَٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَـٰفِظُونَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰٓ أَزْوَٰجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَـٰنُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ فَمَنِ ٱبْتَغَىٰ وَرَآءَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْعَادُونَ﴾ "Certainly will the believers have succeeded: They who are during their prayer humbly intent And they who turn away from ill speech And they who are observant of zakāh And they who guard their private parts Except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed - But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors -" [al-Mu'minun 23:1–7] ... [440]

And He تعالى said: ﴿وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّىٰ يُغْنِيَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِۦ﴾ "But let them who find not [the means for] marriage abstain [from sexual relations] until Allāh enriches them from His bounty." [al-Nur 24:33]

And He تعالى said: ﴿وَأَن يَسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ وَٱللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾ "But to modestly refrain [from that] is better for them. And Allāh is Hearing and Knowing." [al-Nur 24:60] And He تعالى said: ﴿وَمَرْيَمَ ٱبْنَتَ عِمْرَٰنَ ٱلَّتِىٓ أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِنَا﴾ "And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of 'Imrān, who guarded her chastity, so We blew into [her garment] through Our angel [i.e., Gabriel]" [al-Tahrim 66:12] [441]

And in the *Musnad* and elsewhere[1], raised to the Prophet: "Three have a right upon Allah that He help them: the one who marries, wishing for chastity; the *mukatab* who wishes to pay..." and he mentioned the third. [442]

And Allah سبحانه mentioned of Yusuf al-Siddiq ﷺ the greatest chastity there can be, for the motive that came together in his case did not come together in the case of anyone else. For he ﷺ was young, and youth is the mount of appetite; and he was unmarried, with nothing to compensate him; and he was a stranger away from his family and homeland, while one who lives among his family and companions is ashamed before them that they should learn of it, so that he would fall from their eyes, but when he is a stranger this obstacle is removed; and he was in the position

1 Ahmad (2/251, 437), al-Tirmidhi (1655), al-Nasa'i (6/61) and Ibn Majah (2518), from the hadith of Abu Hurayrah. The *mukatab* is a slave who contracts to buy his own freedom.

of a slave, and a slave does not disdain what a free man disdains.

And the woman was of high rank and beauty, and the motive with that is stronger than the motive of one who is not so; and she was the one who sought, so the burden of a man's exposing himself, seeking and fearing not to be answered was removed by that; and there was added to the seeking complete desire and the soliciting, with which the thought of testing and examination, to know his chastity from his immorality, disappears; and she was in the place of her authority and her house, so that she knew the state of the time of opportunity and its place which eyes do not reach; and she added to that the locking of the doors, so as to be safe from the sudden rush of one coming in; and she came to him with inducement and intimidation; and with all this he abstained for the sake of Allah and did not obey her, and put the right of Allah and the right of her master before all of that. And this is a matter in which, had anyone else been tried with it, it would not be known what his state would have been. [443]

If it is said: But he did intend her.

It is said, two answers on his behalf:

One: that he did not intend her, but had he not seen the proof of his Lord, he would have intended. This is the saying of some, in estimating the verse.

And the second - and it is the correct one: that his intending was an intending of passing thoughts, and he left it for the sake of Allah, so Allah rewarded him for it; while her intending was an intending of persistence, in which she exerted her utmost, and did not reach him; so the two intentions are not equal.

Imam Ahmad said: Intending is of two kinds: an intending of passing thoughts and an intending of persistence. The intending of passing thoughts is not held against one, and the intending of persistence is held against one.

◆ *Seven in the shade, and three in the cave* ◆

And in the two *Sahih*s, from the hadith of Abu Hurayrah, who said:[2] The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Seven will Allah shade in His shade on the day when there is no shade but His shade: a just imam; a young man who grew up in the worship of Allah; a man whose heart is attached to the mosques; two men who loved one another for the sake of Allah, who gathered upon that and parted upon it; a man whom a woman of rank and beauty called, and he said: I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds; a man who gave charity and concealed it so that his left hand did not know what his right hand spent; and a man who remembered Allah in solitude and his eyes overflowed." 446

And in the *Sahih*, from the hadith of Abu Hurayrah and Ibn Umar[3], from the Prophet ﷺ, who said: "Three were walking when the sky overtook them, and they took refuge in a cave in the mountain. A rock from the mountain slid down upon them and closed them in. They said to one another: Look for righteous deeds you have done, and call upon Allah by them. One of them said: O Allah, You know that I had two aged parents, and a wife and children, and I used to pasture for them; and when I came back to them I milked, and I began with my parents, giving them to drink before my children. And one day the trees took me far away, and I did not come until evening, and I found them asleep. So I milked as I used to milk, and came and stood at their heads, disliking to wake them from their sleep and to begin with the children before them, while the children were crying out at my feet. I did not cease to be so until the dawn rose. So if You know that I did that seeking Your face, then open for us an opening through which we may see the sky! So Allah opened for them an opening. 447

And the other said: O Allah, I had a cousin, and I loved her as intensely as men love women, and I sought her for myself, but she refused until I brought her a hundred dinars. So I strove until I gathered a hundred dinars, and I brought them to her. ... She said: O servant of Allah! Fear

2 Al-Bukhari (660) and Muslim (1031).

3 Al-Bukhari (2215, 2272) and Muslim (2743), from the hadith of Ibn Umar. Abu Hurayrah's version is in al-Bazzar and al-Tabarani's *al-Awsat*, as in *Majma' al-Zawa'id* (8/142–143).

Allah, and do not break the seal except by its right. So I rose from her and left the hundred dinars. If You know that I did that seeking Your face, then open for us from this rock! So Allah opened for them an opening. 448

And the other said: O Allah, I had hired a labourer for a *faraq* of rice,[4] and when he finished his work, he said: Give me my due. I gave it to him, but he refused to take it. So I sowed it and made it grow until I bought cattle and their herdsmen with it. He came to me after a time and said: O you! Fear Allah and do not wrong me, and give me my due! I said: Go to those cattle and their herdsmen; they are yours. He said: Fear Allah and do not mock me! I said: I am not mocking you; take that. So he took them and went. If You know that I did that seeking Your face, then open for us what remains of the rock! So Allah opened for them, and they went out walking."

4 A *faraq* is a Madinan dry measure of grain.

◆ *A youth of al-Kufah, and the Priest of Mecca* ◆

And al-Mubarrad mentioned ... from Raja' ibn Amr al-Nakha'i, who said: There was in al-Kufah a young man of beautiful face, intensely devoted to worship and striving, who settled in the neighbourhood of some people of al-Nakha'. He looked at a beautiful girl of theirs and fell in love with her, and his mind wandered with love for her, and there befell the girl what befell him. So he sent to ask for her hand from her father, and her father told him that she was promised to a cousin of hers. When what they suffered of the pain of passion grew severe upon the two of them, the girl sent to him: It has reached me how intense your love for me is, and my affliction through you has grown severe; so if you wish I will visit you, and if you wish I will make easy you to come to me at my house. He said to the messenger: Neither of these two offers, ﴿إِنِّيٓ أَخَافُ إِنۡ عَصَيۡتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوۡمٍ عَظِيمٖ﴾ "Indeed I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day." [al-An'am 6:15] I fear a fire whose blaze never dies down and whose flame is never quenched. When the messenger conveyed his words to her, she said: And I see that he fears Allah despite all this? By Allah, no one has a greater right to this than another, and the servants of Allah share in it equally. Then she stripped herself of the world and cast her attachments behind her back, and she devoted herself to worship, yet all the while she melted away and wasted for love of the youth and yearning for him, until she died of it. The youth would come to her grave and weep beside it and pray for her. One day sleep overcame him at her grave, and he saw her in his dream in the fairest of sights. He said: How are you, and what have you met after I left? She said: 449

نعم المحبة يا سؤلي محبتكم ◆ حب يقود إلى خير وإحسان

How excellent a love, O my desire, is love for you:
a love that leads to good, and leads to kindness too.

How excellent is love, O my wish, your love ◆ a love that leads to good and to kindness

He said: And to what have you come on that account? She said: 450

إلى نعيم وعيش لا زوال له ◆ في جنة الخلد ملك ليس بالفاني

To bliss and a life that does not pass away,
in Eternity's Garden, a kingdom that will not decay.

To bliss and a life that has no end
in the Garden of Eternity, a kingdom that does not perish

He said to her: Remember me there, for I do not forget you. She said: Nor do I, by Allah, forget you! I have asked my Master and your Master to bring us together, so help me in that with diligent effort. He said to her: When shall I see you? She said: You will come to us soon, and you will see us. After the dream the youth lived only seven nights more, and then he died.

Al-Zubayr ibn Bakkar mentioned that Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Ammar settled in Mecca,[5] and he was one of the devout worshippers of its people, so he was called "the Priest" for his devotion. One day he passed by a slave girl who was singing, and he stopped and heard her singing. Her master saw him and told him to enter and come in to her, but he refused. He said: Then sit in a place where you can hear her singing without seeing her. He did so, and she pleased him. Her master said to him: Would you like me to bring her over to you? He held back somewhat, then agreed to it. He looked at her and she pleased him, and he was infatuated (شغف) with her, and she was infatuated with him, and the people of Mecca came to know of it. One day she said to him: By Allah, I love you! He said: And by Allah, I love you! ... She said: Then what prevents you? The place is empty. He said to her: Woe to you! I heard Allah say: ﴿ٱلْأَخِلَّآءُ يَوْمَئِذٍۭ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ "Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous" [al-Zukhruf 43:67] and by Allah, I hate that the intimate friendship between you and me in this world should become enmity on the Day of Resurrection. Then he rose, his eyes pouring tears for love of her.

5 Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Ammar, a pious worshipper of Makkah of the early generations, known as al-Qass ("the Priest") for his devotion.

◆ *Leaving what you desire for what you fear* ◆

Imam Ahmad said: Manliness (الفتوة) is leaving what you desire for the sake of what you fear. 457

Ja'far ibn Sulayman al-Duba'i narrated to us, saying: I heard Malik ibn Dinar[6] say: While I was circling the House, I came upon a small girl, devout, clinging to the covering of the Ka'bah, saying: O Lord! How many a desire whose pleasure has gone and whose consequence has remained! O Lord! Have You no discipline but the Fire? She did not leave her place until dawn broke. When I saw that, I put my hand on my head, crying out, saying: May Malik's mother be bereft of him! A little girl has been at it since the night began and has outdone him.

Al-Zubayr ibn Bakkar said, from Abbas ibn Sahl al-Sa'idi, who said: While I was in Syria, a man of my companions met me and said: Would you like to visit Jamil[7] in his illness? So we went in to him while he was giving up his soul, and it did not seem to me that death troubled him. He looked at me and said: Ibn Sahl! What do you say of a man who never drank wine, never committed fornication, never killed a soul, and bears witness that there is no god but Allah? I said: I think he is saved, and I hope for Paradise for him. Who is this man? He said: I am! I said: By Allah, I do not think you are safe, when for twenty years you have been composing love poetry on Buthaynah. He said: May the intercession of Muhammad ﷺ not reach me on the Day of Resurrection, for I am in the first day of the days of the Hereafter and the last day of the days of this world, if I ever laid my hand on her in suspicion. We had not left when he died. 463

When Urwah ibn al-Zubayr came to al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik, gangrene appeared in his foot, and the physicians agreed that it must be cut off, and that if it were not, it would spread to his body and he would die. When he resolved on it, they said to him: Shall we give you a drink to make you sleep? He said: Why? They said: So that you do not feel what we do. He said: No! Do as you must. So they sawed his leg with the saw, and they did not part one limb from another until they had finished with

6 Malik ibn Dinar (d. c. 130 AH) was a Basran Successor and ascetic.

7 Jamil ibn Ma'mar (d. 82 AH), the poet, and his beloved Buthaynah.

it. Then they cauterised it, and when he saw it in their hands, he took it and said: Praise be to Allah! By the One who carried me upon you, He knows that I never walked with you to anything forbidden. 465

Bishr ibn al-Walid said: I heard Abu Yusuf say in the illness in which he died: O Allah, You know that I never had intercourse with a forbidden private part, knowingly, and never ate a forbidden dirham, knowingly. 468

◆ *Ubayd ibn Umayr and the woman of Mecca* ◆

Abu al-Faraj and others mentioned[8] that there was a beautiful woman in Mecca who had a husband. One day she looked at her face in the mirror and said to her husband: Do you think anyone could see this face and not be tempted by it? He said: Yes! She said: Who? He said: Ubayd ibn Umayr. She said: Then give me leave regarding him, and I will tempt him. He said: I have given you leave. He said: She came to him like one seeking a ruling, and he was alone with her in a corner of the Sacred Mosque. She unveiled a face like a sliver of the moon. He said to her: O servant of Allah, cover yourself! She said: I am tempted by you. He said: I will ask you about something, and if you are truthful with me I will look into your affair. She said: You will not ask me about anything but I will tell you the truth. He said: Tell me: if the Angel of Death came to you to take your soul, would it please you that I should fulfil this need of yours for you? She said: O Allah, no! He said: You have spoken truly. He said: And if you entered your grave and were made to sit for questioning, would it please you that I had fulfilled it for you? She said: O Allah, no! He said: You have spoken truly. He said: And if the people were given their books, and you did not know whether you would take your book in your right hand or your left, would it please you that I had fulfilled it for you? She said: O Allah, no! He said: You have spoken truly. He said: And if you wanted to walk across the Path and did not know whether you would be saved or not, would it please you that I had fulfilled it for you? She said: O Allah, no! He said: You have spoken truly. He said: And if the Balance were brought and you were brought, not knowing whether your scale would be light or heavy, would it please you that I had fulfilled it for you? She said: O Allah, no! He said: You have spoken truly. He said: And if you stood before Allah for questioning, would it please you that I had fulfilled it for you? She said: O Allah, no! He said: You have spoken truly. He said: Fear Allah! Allah has favoured you and been good to you. He said: She went back to her husband, who said: What did you do? She said: You are an idler, and we are idlers. Then she turned to prayer, fasting and worship, and her husband would say: What have I to do with Ubayd ibn Umayr?

8 Abu al-Faraj is Ibn al-Jawzi, in *Dhamm al-Hawa* (pp. 265–266).

He has spoiled my wife for me. She used to be a bride every night, and he turned her into a nun. 470

◆ *Why the chaste abstain* ◆

For this group's chastity there are causes, the strongest of which is reverence for the Almighty, then desire for the fair houris in the abode of permanence. For whoever turns his enjoyment in this abode to what Allah has forbidden him is barred from enjoying the fair houris there, as said ﷺ: "Whoever wears silk in this world will not wear it in the Hereafter,"[9] and "Whoever drinks wine in this world will not drink it in the Hereafter."[10] 474

So Allah does not combine for the servant the pleasure of drinking wine, wearing silk, and enjoying what Allah has forbidden him of women and boys, with the pleasure of enjoying them in the Hereafter. Let the servant choose for himself one of the two pleasures, and let him be content with the one in place of the other. Whoever refuses, then Allah will not make the one who has used up his good things in his worldly life and enjoyed them like the one who fasted from them for the day of his breaking the fast in this world, when he meets Allah. Below that rank is that he leaves them only for fear of the Fire, for leaving them out of desire and love is better than leaving them out of mere fear of punishment. 475

Lower than that is that fear of disgrace and scandal carries him to it. Among them is one whom chastity is carried to by wishing to preserve his love, fearing that union would end it. Among them is one whom the chastity and purity of his beloved leads to it. Among them is one whom shame before him leads to it, and reserve toward him, and the greatness he holds in his heart. Among them is one whom desire for a fair mention and a good report leads to it. Among them is one whom preserving his standing, his manliness and his rank with his beloved and with the people leads to it. Among them is one whom the nobility of his nature, the honour of his soul and the loftiness of his aspiration lead to it. Among them is one whom the pleasure of succeeding in chastity leads to it, for chastity has a pleasure greater than the pleasure of fulfilling the need, but it is a pleasure preceded by the pain of restraining the soul, then the pleasure follows it, whereas fulfilling the need is the opposite of that. Among them is one

9 Al-Bukhari (5832) and Muslim (2073), from the hadith of Anas.

10 Al-Bukhari (5575), from the hadith of Abd Allah ibn Umar.

whom his knowledge of the harms and corruptions that unlawful pleasure brings after it leads to it, and of how depravity gathers all the qualities of evil, as you will see in the chapter that follows this, if Allah wills.

◆ *The worst of paths* ◆

It befits every man of reason not to walk any path until he knows its safety and its dangers, and what that road leads to, whether safety or ruin. These two paths have been the destruction of the earlier and the later peoples, and in them lie the perils and ruin that lie in them, and they bring their traveller to the foulest of ends and the worst of watering-places of destruction. For this reason He سبحانه made the path of fornication the worst of paths, saying تعالى: ﴿وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا۟ ٱلزِّنَىٰٓ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ فَـٰحِشَةً وَسَآءَ سَبِيلًا﴾ "And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way." [al-Isra' 17:32] If this is the path of fornication, then what of the path of sodomy, in which the single deed equals, in sin and punishment, many times and many times over the times of fornication? As you will see, if Allah wills. 485

As for the path of fornication, it is the worst of paths, and the resting-place of its people in Hell is the worst of resting-places. The abode of their souls in the barzakh[11] is in an oven of fire, whose flame comes to them from beneath them, and when the flame comes to them they cry out and rise up, then return to their place, and so they are until the Day of Resurrection, as the Prophet ﷺ saw them in his sleep, and the vision of the prophets is revelation about which there is no doubt.[12]

Imam Ahmad said: After the killing of a soul there is nothing greater than fornication. 491

In the two *Sahih*s, in the hadith of Abu Wa'il, from Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, who said: I said: O Messenger of Allah! Which sin is greatest in the sight of Allah? He said: "That you set up a rival to Allah when He created you." I said: Then which? He said: "That you kill your child for fear that he will eat with you." I said: Then which? He said: "That you commit fornication with the wife of your neighbour."[13] Then Allah sent down the confirmation of that in His Book: ﴿وَٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ ٱللَّهِ إِلَـٰهًا ءَاخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ ٱلنَّفْسَ ٱلَّتِى حَرَّمَ ٱللَّهُ إِلَّا بِٱلْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا﴾ "And those who do not invoke with Allāh another deity

11 The barzakh: the interval between a person's death and the Day of Resurrection.

12 The vision is in the hadith of Samurah ibn Jundab: al-Bukhari (845, and other places) and Muslim (2275).

13 Al-Bukhari (4761) and Muslim (86).

or kill the soul which Allāh has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty." [al-Furqan 25:68]

In the two *Sahih*s, in the hadith of al-A'mash[14], from Abu Hazim, from Abu Hurayrah, who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Three Allah will not speak to on the Day of Resurrection, nor look at, nor purify, and theirs is a painful punishment: an old fornicator, a lying king, and an arrogant pauper."

It is enough for the ugliness of fornication that Allah سبحانه, with the perfection of His mercy, ordained for it the most shameful, the hardest and the most disgraceful of killings, and commanded that His believing servants witness the punishment of its doer. 493

14 Al-Bukhari (2369) and Muslim (107), from Abu Hurayrah.

◆ *Fornication gathers every evil* ◆

Fornication gathers all the qualities of evil: little religion, the loss of scrupulousness, the corruption of manliness, and little jealousy. You will not find a fornicator who has scrupulousness, or loyalty to a covenant, or truthfulness in speech, or care for a friend, or complete jealousy for his family. Treachery, lying, betrayal, little shame, lack of watchfulness, lack of protectiveness for what is sacred, and the loss of jealousy from the heart are among its branches and its consequences.

Among its consequences: the anger of the Lord at the corruption of His sanctities and dependants, and if a man did that to one of the kings, he would meet him with the worst of treatment. Among them: blackness of the face, its darkness, and the gloom and loathing that overspread it and show on it to those who look. Among them: darkness of the heart and the effacing of its light, which is what necessitated the effacing of the light of the face and the covering of it with darkness. Among them: lasting poverty. 494

And in a report: "Allah تعالى says: I am Allah, the destroyer of the tyrants and the impoverisher of the fornicators."[15] Among them: that it removes the sanctity of its doer and drops him from the eye of his Lord and from the eyes of His servants. Among them: that it strips him of the finest names, which are the name of chastity, of righteousness and of uprightness, and gives him their opposites, such as the name of the wicked, the sinful, the fornicator and the traitor.

Among them: that it strips him of the name of believer, as in the *Sahih*, from the Prophet ﷺ, who said: "The fornicator does not commit fornication while he is a believer."[16] So he is stripped of the name of absolute faith[17], though not stripped of faith in the absolute.

Ja'far ibn Muhammad[18] was asked about this hadith, and he drew a circle on the ground and said: This is the circle of faith. Then he drew

15 Ibn al-Jawzi, *Dhamm al-Hawa* (p. 192), from Ibn Umar.

16 Al-Bukhari (2475) and Muslim (57), from Abu Hurayrah.

17 That is, he loses the unqualified title "believer", but some faith, faith as such, remains with him.

18 Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (d. 148 AH), the Madinan scholar of the House of the Prophet ﷺ.

another circle outside it and said: This is the circle of Islam. When the servant commits fornication, he leaves this one, and does not leave this one.

It does not follow from his having some part of faith that he is called a believer, just as a man may have some part of knowledge and understanding and is not called by it a knowledgeable jurist, and he may have a part of courage and generosity and is not called by that courageous or generous, and likewise he may have something of piety and is not called pious. And similar cases. So the correct course is to let the hadith run on its apparent meaning and not to interpret it against its apparent meaning, and Allah knows best.

◆ *What the fornicator loses* ◆

Among them: that he exposes himself to dwelling in the oven in which the Prophet ﷺ saw the fornicators, men and women. Among them: that the goodness with which Allah described the people of chastity leaves him, and he takes in exchange for it the foulness with which Allah described the fornicators, as He تعالى said: ﴿ٱلْخَبِيثَٰتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَٱلْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَٰتِ وَٱلطَّيِّبَٰتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَٱلطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَٰتِ﴾ "Evil words are for evil men, and evil men are [subjected] to evil words. And good words are for good men, and good men are [an object] of good words." [al-Nur 24:26] 495

Allah has forbidden Paradise to every foul one, and has made it the abode of the good, and none enters it but the good. He تعالى said: ﴿ٱلَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّىٰهُمُ ٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ يَقُولُونَ سَلَٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱدْخُلُوا۟ ٱلْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ﴾ "The ones whom the angels take in death, [being] good and pure; [the angels] will say, "Peace be upon you. Enter Paradise for what you used to do."" [al-Nahl 16:32]. And He تعالى said: ﴿وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَٱدْخُلُوهَا خَٰلِدِينَ﴾ "and its keepers say, "Peace be upon you; you have become pure; so enter it to abide eternally therein,"" [al-Zumar 39:73]. They deserved the greeting of the angels and entry into Paradise only by their goodness, and the fornicators are among the foulest of creation. Allah سبحانه has made Hell the abode of foulness and its people, and on the Day of Resurrection the foul will be set apart from the good, and the foul will be put one upon another, then He will cast it and its people into Hell, so no good one enters the Fire and no foul one enters Paradise.

Among them: the desolation that Allah places in the heart of the fornicator, which is the counterpart of the desolation that overspreads his face. The chaste man has sweetness on his face and companionship in his heart, and whoever sits with him is at ease with him, while on the face of the fornicator there is desolation, and whoever sits with him feels desolate with him.

Among them: the lack of awe that is removed from the breasts of his family, his companions and others toward him, so that he is the lowest of things in their souls and eyes, unlike the chaste man, who is given awe and sweetness. 496

Among them: that people look at him with an eye of betrayal, and no

one trusts him with his women or his child.

Among them: tightness of the chest and its constriction, for the fornicators are met with the opposite of what they intend, for whoever seeks the pleasure and sweetness of life by what Allah has forbidden him, Allah punishes him with the opposite of his aim. What is with Allah is attained only by obeying Him, and Allah has never made disobedience to Him a cause of any good. If the wicked man knew what pleasure, joy, expansion of the chest and sweetness of life there is in chastity, he would see that what he has missed of pleasure is many times over what he gained, leaving aside the profit of the end and the winning of the reward of Allah and His honour.

◆ *An army of sins, and the people of Lut* ◆

Among them: that fornication emboldens him to cut the ties of kinship, to disobey his parents, to earn what is unlawful, to wrong creation, and to neglect his family and dependants, and at times it may lead him by force to shed forbidden blood, and at times he may seek its aid in sorcery and in shirk, knowing it or not knowing. [497]

This disobedience is not complete without kinds of disobedience before it and with it, and kinds of other disobedience are born from it after it. So it is surrounded by an army of disobedience before it and an army after it. It brings most of the evil of this world and the Hereafter and bars most of the good of this world and the Hereafter. When it clings to a servant and he falls into its snares and traps, it is hard for the advisers to rescue him and his remedy wearies the physicians. Its captive is not ransomed and its slain is not paid for in blood-money. Allah سبحانه has entrusted it with the removal of blessings, so when a servant is afflicted with it, let him bid farewell to the blessings of Allah, for it is a guest quick to move on, soon to pass. Allah تعالى said: ﴿إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا۟ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَآ أَرَادَ ٱللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوٓءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُۥ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن دُونِهِۦ مِن وَالٍ﴾ “Indeed, Allāh will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allāh intends for a people ill, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Him any patron.” [al-Ra'd 13:11]

This is some of the harm in this path. As for the path of the nation of Lut, that is the path of the doomed, which leads its traveller to the stations of the tormented, upon whom Allah gathered kinds of punishment that He gathered upon no nation of the nations, neither those after them nor those before, and He made their dwellings and their traces a lesson for those who take heed and an admonition for the God-fearing. [498]

Allah سبحانه has mentioned the punishment of the sodomites and the affliction that befell them in ten surahs of the Qur'an, which are: Surat al-A'raf, Hud, al-Hijr, al-Anbiya', al-Furqan, al-Shu'ara', al-Naml, al-Ankabut, al-Saffat, and Iqtarabat al-Sa'ah. He gathered upon the people blindness of sight, the sinking of their dwellings, the casting of stones, and entry into the Fire. And, warning those who do their deed of the severe punishment that befell them, He said: ﴿وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوطٍ مِّنكُم بِبَعِيدٍ﴾ “And

the people of Lot are not from you far away." [Hud 11:89] 510

Pleasures go and regrets follow, appetite passes away and wretchedness remains. And Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal رحمه الله تعالى used to recite:

تفنى اللذاذة ممن نال صفوتها ◆ من الحرام ويبقى الخزي والعار

The pleasure fades for one who gained its purest part
from what's unlawful; shame and disgrace will not depart.

The pleasure passes for the one who gains its purest part
from the unlawful, and the disgrace and the shame remain

تبقى عواقب سوء في مغبتها ◆ لا خير في لذة من بعدها النار

Its evil outcomes stay behind when it is through;
no good is in a pleasure after which the Fire is due.

Evil consequences remain at its end
there is no good in a pleasure after which comes the Fire

◆ *Whoever leaves something for Allah* ◆

The heading of this chapter and its principle: whoever leaves something for the sake of Allah, Allah compensates him with better than it. Just as Yusuf al-Siddiq - عليه السلام - left the wife of al-Aziz for the sake of Allah, and chose prison over lewdness, so Allah compensated him by establishing him in the land, to settle in it wherever he wished; and the woman came to him abased, asking, desiring lawful union, and he married her. When he went in to her, he said: This is better than what you wanted.[19] 600

And consider how Allah - سبحانه - repaid him for the narrowness of prison by establishing him in the land, to dwell in it wherever he wished; He made al-Aziz and his wife submit to him, and the woman and the women acknowledged his innocence. And this is His way تعالى with His servants, of old and now, until the Day of Resurrection.

When Sulayman ibn Dawud - عليهما الصلاة والسلام - hamstrung the horses that had kept him from the afternoon prayer until the sun had set, in anger for Allah, Allah compensated him for them with the wind, upon whose back he and his army rode wherever he wished.

When the Emigrants left their homes for the sake of Allah, and their homelands, which were the dearest thing to them, Allah compensated them by opening this world to them and giving them dominion over the east of the earth and its west.

And if the thief feared Allah and left stealing protected wealth for the sake of Allah, Allah would give him the like of it lawfully. Allah تعالى said: ﴿وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجۡعَل لَّهُۥ مَخۡرَجٗا وَيَرۡزُقۡهُ مِنۡ حَيۡثُ لَا يَحۡتَسِبُ﴾ "And whoever fears Allāh - He will make for him a way out And will provide for him from where he does not expect." [al-Talaq 65:2–3] So He - سبحانه وتعالى - informed that when he fears Him by leaving what is not lawful for him, He provides for him from where he does not expect.

19 The author gives this account of Yusuf's marriage to the wife of al-Aziz, and his words to her, without naming a source, and the Arabic editor cites none. The Qur'an does not mention it.

◆ *The answer on the note, and the butcher's thirst* ◆

Abu al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi - رحمه الله تعالى - said: It has reached me about one of the nobles: that he passed by a graveyard, and there was a beautiful girl in black garments, and he looked at her, and she clung to his heart. So he wrote to her: ... And he threw the note to her. When she read it, she wrote: 601

إن كنت ذا حسب زاك وذا نسب ◆ إن الشريف بغض الطرف معروف

If a pure and noble lineage is your own,
by lowering the gaze the noble one is known.

If you are of pure lineage and noble descent ◆ the noble one is known by lowering his gaze

إن الزناة أناس لا خلاق لهم ◆ فاعلم بأنك يوم الدين موقوف

In the Hereafter, fornicators have no share;
so know on Judgement Day you'll be made to stand there.

The fornicators are people who have no share {in the Hereafter}
so know that you will be made to stand on the Day of Judgement

When he read the note, he rebuked himself and said: Is a woman to be braver than you? Then he repented, put on a woollen robe, and took refuge in the Sanctuary. While he was circling one day, there was that girl in a woollen cloak, and she said to him: How unbecoming this is for a noble man! Do you want the permissible? He said: I used to seek this before I knew Allah and loved Him, and now His love has occupied me from the love of anyone else. She said to him: Well done! By Allah, I said this to you only to test you, to know the limit to which you had reached ... 602

Bakr ibn Abd Allah al-Muzani mentioned: that a butcher became infatuated with a girl belonging to one of his neighbours. Her family sent her on an errand to another village, and he followed her and sought to have her. She said: Do not! For I love you more than you love me, but I fear Allah! He said: You fear Him, and I do not fear Him?! So he returned repentant, and thirst struck him until his neck almost broke off. Then there was a messenger sent to the Children of Israel, and he asked him: What is the matter with you? He said: Thirst. He said: Come, let us call upon Allah so that a cloud shades us until we enter the village! He said: I

have no deed, so how can I call upon Him? He said: Then I shall call upon Him, and you say Amin. So he called, and the man said Amin, and a cloud shaded them until they reached the village. The butcher went to his place, and the cloud went back with him. The messenger returned to him and said: You claimed that you have no deed, yet I am the one who called, and you said Amin, and a cloud shaded us, then followed you! Tell me what your affair is! So he told him, and the messenger said: The one who repents to Allah has a station that none among the people has. 606

◆ *Two gardens for the one who fears* ◆

Yahya ibn Ayyub said:[20] There was in Madinah a youth whose condition pleased Umar ibn al-Khattab - رضي الله عنه -. One night he went home from the night prayer, and a woman appeared before him and offered herself to him. He was tempted by her, and she went on, and he followed her until he stood at her door. Then he saw clearly, and it was cleared from his heart, and this verse came to him: ﴿إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّقَوْا۟ إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوا۟ فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ﴾ "Indeed, those who fear Allāh - when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember [Him] and at once they have insight." [al-A'raf 7:201] He fell down unconscious. The woman looked at him, and he was like a dead man. She and a girl of hers kept helping each other with him until they laid him at the door of his house. His father came out and saw him thrown down at the door of the house in his state, so he carried him and brought him in, and he came to. He asked him: What has befallen you, my son?! He did not tell him, but he kept on at him until he told him. When he recited the verse, he gave a gasp and his soul went out. His story reached Umar - رضي الله عنه -, and he said: Why did you not inform me of his death? He went until he stood at his grave and called: O so-and-so: ﴿وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ جَنَّتَانِ﴾ "But for he who has feared the position of his Lord are two gardens -" [al-Rahman 55:46] And he heard a voice from inside the grave: My Lord has given it to me, O Umar! 607

20 Ibn al-Jawzi, *Dhamm al-Hawa* (pp. 252–253).

And in the *Jami* of al-Tirmidhi, from the hadith of Ibn Umar - رضي الله عنهما -, who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Dhu al-Kifl did not refrain from any sin he could do. A woman came to him, and he gave her sixty dinars on condition that he have her. When he sat with her as a man sits with his wife, she trembled and wept. He said: What makes you weep? Have I compelled you? She said: No, but this is a deed I have never done, and only need drove me to it. He said: You do this though you have never done it? Then he said: Go, and the dinars are yours. Then he said: By Allah, Dhu al-Kifl will never disobey Allah again! He died that night, and in the morning there was written on his door: Allah has forgiven Dhu al-Kifl." Al-Tirmidhi said: This is a hasan hadith.[21] 608

Maymun ibn Mihran said: Remembrance is of two kinds. The remembrance of Allah - عز وجل - with the tongue is good, and better than it is that you remember Allah - عز وجل - when you are about to commit acts of disobedience to Him. 609

Qatadah - رضي الله عنه - said[22]: It was mentioned to us that the Prophet of Allah ﷺ used to say: "No man has power over what is forbidden and then leaves it, with nothing in him but fear of Allah - عز وجل -, but that Allah gives him in exchange, in the immediate world before the Hereafter, what is better for him than that."

Ubayd ibn Umayr said: The truthfulness of faith and its righteousness is that a man be alone with a beautiful woman and leave her, not leaving her except for Allah عز وجل.

21 Al-Tirmidhi (2498) and Ahmad (2/23).

22 Ibn al-Jawzi, *Dhamm al-Hawa* (p. 245).

◆ *Prison rather than sin* ◆

This is a chapter through which only two men enter. One of them: the one in whose heart faith in the Hereafter has taken firm hold, and in what Allah has prepared in it of reward and punishment for whoever disobeys Him, so he prefers the lesser of two losses and chooses the easier of two punishments. The second: a man whose reason has overcome his desire, so he knows what there is in lewdness of corruptions and in turning away from it of benefits, and prefers the higher over the lower. 617

Allah - سبحانه وتعالى - brought together for Yusuf al-Siddiq - صلوات الله وسلامه عليه - both matters. He chose the punishment of this world, prison, over committing the forbidden, and the woman said: ﴿وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَآ ءَامُرُهُۥ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُونًا مِّنَ ٱلصَّٰغِرِينَ قَالَ رَبِّ ٱلسِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَىَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِىٓ إِلَيْهِ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّى كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ ٱلْجَٰهِلِينَ﴾ “and if he will not do what I order him, he will surely be imprisoned and will be of those debased." He said, "My Lord, prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me. And if You do not avert from me their plan, I might incline toward them and [thus] be of the ignorant."” [Yusuf 12:32–33] So he chose prison over lewdness, then disowned before Allah any power or strength of his own, and informed that this was only by Allah's help to him, His granting of success and His support, not from himself. So he said: ﴿وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّى كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ﴾ “And if You do not avert from me their plan, I might incline toward them” [Yusuf 12:33].

So the servant must not rely on himself, his patience, his state or his chastity; whenever he relies on that, the protection of Allah leaves him, and abandonment surrounds him. And Allah تعالى said to the most honoured of creation to Him and the most beloved of them to Him: ﴿وَلَوْلَآ أَن ثَبَّتْنَٰكَ لَقَدْ كِدتَّ تَرْكَنُ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْـًٔا قَلِيلًا﴾ “And if We had not strengthened you, you would have almost inclined to them” “a little.” [al-Isra' 17:74] For this reason it was among his supplications: “O Turner of hearts! Make my heart firm[23] upon Your religion,” and most of his oath was: “No, by the Turner of hearts[24]!” How could it be otherwise, when it

23 Ahmad (3/112), al-Tirmidhi (3522) and Ibn Majah (3834), from the hadith of Anas. Al-Tirmidhi says: hasan sahih.

24 Al-Bukhari (6617, 6628, 7391), from the hadith of Ibn Umar.

was he to whom was revealed: ﴿وَٱعۡلَمُوٓاْ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيۡنَ ٱلۡمَرۡءِ وَقَلۡبِهِۦ﴾ "And know that Allāh intervenes between a man and his heart" [al-Anfal 8:24].

The way of Allah تعالى with His creation has run thus: whoever prefers immediate pain over forbidden union, Allah follows that in this world with complete joy; and if he perishes, then the great success. Allah تعالى does not let go to waste what His servant bears for His sake. 618

And in some of the divine reports Allah سبحانه وتعالى says: "Before My eyes is what those who bear hardship bear for My sake."[25] Everyone who gives up something of himself for Allah, Allah preserves it for him or compensates him with what is more majestic than it. For this reason, when the martyrs gave up their souls for Allah, Allah made them alive with Him, provided for, and compensated them for their bodies, which they gave up for Him, with the bodies of green birds, in which Allah placed their spirits to range through Paradise wherever they wish, and to take shelter in lamps hung from the Throne. And when they left their dwellings for Him, He compensated them with good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. That is the great success.

25 The author gives this divine report without a source, and the Arabic editor cites none.

◆ *The lamp, and one like Yusuf* ◆

Wahb ibn Munabbih said: There was a worshipper among the worshippers of the Children of Israel who devoted himself to worship in his hermitage. A man of the insolent ones came to a prostitute, offered her money, and said: Perhaps you can tempt him. So she came to him on a rainy night and called to him. He looked down at her, and she said: Give me shelter with you! He left her and turned to his prayer. She said: O servant of Allah! Give me shelter with you! Do you not see the darkness and the rain?! She did not cease with him until he gave her shelter. She lay down near him and began to show him her beauties until his soul called him to her. He said: No, by Allah, until I see how your patience is with the fire. So he went forward to the lamp and put one of his fingers in it until it burned. Then he returned to his prayer, and his soul called him to her, so he went back to the lamp and put his other finger in it until it burned. His soul kept calling him, and he kept going back to the lamp until all his fingers burned while she watched. She was struck senseless and died.

Husayn ibn Abd al-Rahman said[26]: It has reached me that a youth of the people of Madinah used to attend all the prayers with Umar ibn al-Khattab - رضي الله عنه -, and Umar would look for him if he was absent. A woman of the people of Madinah fell passionately in love with him, and she mentioned that to one of her women, who said: I shall devise a way for you to bring him in to you. So she sat for him on the road, and when he passed by her, she said to him: I am an old woman, and I have a ewe that I cannot milk. If only you would come in and milk it for me - and they were most eager of all things for good - so he entered, but did not see a ewe. She said: Sit until I bring it to you. Then the woman appeared, and when he saw that, he went to a niche in the house and sat in it. She sought to have him, and he refused and said: Fear Allah, woman! She did not stop with him and did not heed his words. When he refused her, she cried out against him, and they came, and she said: This man entered upon me wanting me for myself. So they leapt upon him and began to beat him and bound him. When Umar had prayed the dawn prayer, he missed him.

26 Ibn al-Jawzi, *Dhamm al-Hawa* (pp. 253–254).

While he was thus, they brought him in bonds, and when Umar saw him he said: O Allah, do not belie my opinion of him. He said: What is the matter with you? They said: A woman cried for help in the night, and we came, and found this lad with her, so we beat him and bound him! Umar - رضي الله عنه - said to him: Tell me the truth! So he told him the story as it was. Umar - رضي الله عنه - said to him: Would you know the old woman? He said: Yes, if I see her I shall know her. So Umar sent for the women of her neighbours, and their old women, and they came, and he presented them, and he did not know her among them, until the old woman passed by him, and he said: This is she, O Commander of the Believers! Umar raised the whip over her and said: Tell me the truth! So she told him the story as the youth had told it. Umar said: Praise be to Allah, who has made among us one like Yusuf. 620

Glossary

barzakh: the interval between a person's death and the Day of Resurrection.

hadith: a report of the words or deeds of the Prophet ﷺ.

hasan: "good": a grade of hadith, below sahih, accepted as evidence.

houris: the wide-eyed maidens of Paradise.

mukatab: a slave who contracts to buy his own freedom.

sahih: "sound": the highest grade of hadith; *the two Sahihs* are the collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim.

zakāh: the obligatory alms.



This booklet is a selection, in Ibn al-Qayyim's own words, from the complete English translation of *Rawdat al-Muhibbin wa-Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin*. Omissions within a passage are shown by "...". The small numbers after the paragraphs give the page of the complete translation, where the full text, its sources and its notes may be found.

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