SELECTIONS FROM RAWDAT AL-MUHIBBIN · 8

The Higher Love

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

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah
d. 751 AH

IBN JĀZĪ · FUSTAT SERIES

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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. Among his books is *Rawdat al-Muhibbin wa-Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin* (The Garden of the Lovers and the Delight of the Yearning), a book of twenty-nine chapters on love, the love that is praised and the love that is censured.

This booklet is drawn from the last part of the book. It opens with a few pages from Chapter Twenty-Five, "On Mercy for Lovers, and Interceding for Them with Their Beloveds in the Union That the Religion Permits". Most of it is taken from Chapter Twenty-Six, "On the Lovers' Leaving the Lower of Two Beloveds out of Desire for the Higher of Them", which treats the love of Allah. It closes with Chapter Twenty-Nine, "On the Censure of Desire and the Attainment of Wishes in Opposing It", and with the final words of the book.

The reader will find here what the author says of aspiration to Allah, of the knowers and the true lover, of Allah's love for His servants and their love for Him and for one another for His sake, of His beauty and the seeing of His Face in Paradise, of yearning for the meeting with Him, and of desire and how one is freed from it.

The text is Ibn al-Qayyim's own, abridged by selection. Cuts are shown by "...", and the full translation gives the complete text. Where the author numbers his points, his numbers are kept, so a gap in the numbering marks points left out.

◆ *Interceding for those who love* ◆

Allah تعالى said: ﴿مَّن يَشۡفَعۡ شَفَـٰعَةً حَسَنَةً يَكُن لَّهُۥ نَصِيبٌ مِّنۡهَا وَمَن يَشۡفَعۡ شَفَـٰعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَكُن لَّهُۥ كِفۡلٌ مِّنۡهَا﴾ "Whoever intercedes for a good cause will have a share [i.e., reward] therefrom; and whoever intercedes for an evil cause will have a portion [i.e., burden] therefrom." [al-Nisa' 4:85] Everyone who helps another in a matter by his word or deed has become an intercessor for him, and intercession for the one interceded for has this as its root, for the intercessor intercedes for the one in need, and so becomes for him a pair in fulfilling it, because of his inability to manage it alone. So every two who cooperate in good or evil, by word or deed, come under the ruling of this verse. Its like is His saying تعالى: ﴿وَتَعَاوَنُواْ عَلَى ٱلۡبِرِّ وَٱلتَّقۡوَىٰۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُواْ عَلَى ٱلۡإِثۡمِ وَٱلۡعُدۡوَٰنِ﴾ "And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression." [al-Ma'idah 5:2] 514

And in the *Sahih*, from him ﷺ: that when someone seeking a need came to him, he would say: "Intercede and you will be rewarded, and Allah decrees by the tongue of His Messenger what He loves."[1]

And in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, that when Barirah was freed, she chose herself, and her husband would walk behind her, his tears running down his beard, and the Prophet ﷺ said to her: "If you took him back, for he is the father of your child." She said: Are you commanding me? He said: "No! I am only interceding." She said: Then I have no need of him.[2]

This is the intercession of the master of intercessors for a lover with his beloved, and it is among the most excellent of intercessions and the greatest in reward with Allah, for it includes the joining of two beloved ones in what Allah and His Messenger love, and for this reason the dearest thing to Iblis and his soldiers is to separate these two. 515

The point is that interceding for passionate lovers in what is permitted of union and meeting is an established Sunnah and a commended effort. 517

It has come from more than one of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and those after them that they interceded with this intercession. 518

Abu al-Sa'ib al-Makhzumi was one of the reciters and jurists, and he

1 Al-Bukhari (6028) and Muslim (2627), from the hadith of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari.

2 Al-Bukhari (5283, 5318), from the hadith of Ibn Abbas.

was seen clinging to the coverings of the Ka'bah, saying: O Allah, have mercy on passionate lovers! And turn the hearts of the beloved toward them. He was asked about that, and he said: Praying for them is better than an umrah from al-Ji'ranah. [531]

◆ *The proud soul and the lower beloved* ◆

This is a chapter that none enters but the virtuous, noble, proud souls, who are not content with the lowly, and do not sell the higher for the lower with the sale of the weak and the cheated, and who are not possessed by a smear of beauty covered over kinds of ugliness ... [534]

The proud soul is not satisfied with the lowly. Allah سبحانه blamed people who exchanged one food for another lower than it, and He rebuked them for that, and said: ﴿أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ ٱلَّذِى هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِٱلَّذِى هُوَ خَيْرٌ﴾ "Would you exchange what is better for what is less?" [al-Baqarah 2:61] and that is proof of the baseness of the soul and the smallness of its worth.

Ibrahim ibn al-Junayd mentioned that a man solicited a woman for herself, and she said to him: You have heard the Qur'an and the hadith, so you know better! He said: Then lock the doors. She locked them, and when he drew near her she said: One door remains that I have not locked! He said: Which door?! She said: The door between you and Allah! So he did not approach her. [535]

◆ *The admonisher in the heart* ◆

Dayghum said to a man: Love of Him عز وجل has occupied the hearts of His lovers from taking delight in love of another, so they have in this world, with love of Him عز وجل, no pleasure that approaches love of Him, and they hope in the Hereafter for no honour of reward greater in their sight than looking at the face of their Beloved. The man fell down in a faint. 539

In the *Musnad* of Imam Ahmad, in the hadith of ... al-Nawwas ibn Sam'an رضي الله عنه, from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who said: "Allah has set forth a parable: a straight path, and on the two sides of the path two walls, and in the two walls open doors, and over the doors hanging curtains, and at the head of the path a caller saying: O people, enter the path all together, and do not turn aside! And a caller calling from above the path, and when anyone wants to open any of those doors, he says: Woe to you! Do not open it, for if you open it you will go through it. The path is Islam, the hanging curtains are the limits of Allah, the open doors are the forbidden things of Allah, the caller at the head of the path is the Book of Allah عز وجل, and the caller from above the path is the admonisher of Allah in the heart of every Muslim."[3] 540

And in *al-Musnad*, in the hadith of Fadalah ibn Ubayd, from the Prophet ﷺ: "The mujahid is he who strives against his own soul for Allah's sake, and the incapable one is he who makes his soul follow its desire and wishes on Allah."[4] 541

Umar ibn al-Khattab رضي الله عنه said to Abu Musa: O Abu Musa! Make us yearn for our Lord. He said: Then he recited. They said: The prayer! Umar said: Are we not in prayer?[5] 544

3 Ahmad (4/182–183). The Arabic editor says it is a sahih hadith.

4 Graded sahih by the Arabic editor, who refers to al-Albani's *al-Silsilah al-Sahihah* (549); the references he gives for this wording could not be confirmed.

5 Ahmad, *al-Zuhd* (p. 119).

◆ *The four seasons of the believer* ◆

The pillar of the whole matter is desire for Allah, seeking His face, drawing near to Him by every kind of means, and yearning to reach Him and meet Him. If the servant has no aspiration for that, then desire for Paradise and its bliss and what Allah has prepared in it for His friends. If he has no lofty aspiration that demands that of him, then fear of the Fire and what Allah has prepared in it for whoever disobeys Him. If his soul does not obey him in any of that, let him know that he was created for Hell, not for bliss, and that he cannot do so, after the decree of Allah and His granting success, except by opposing his desire.

These are four seasons: the spring of the believer, his summer, his autumn and his winter, and they are his stations in his journey to Allah, and he has no station other than them. As for opposing desire, Allah has made no path to Paradise other than opposing it, and no path to the Fire other than following it. Allah تعالى said: ﴿فَأَمَّا مَن طَغَىٰ وَءَاثَرَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةَ ٱلدُّنْيَا فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَحِيمَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ وَنَهَى ٱلنَّفْسَ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَنَّةَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ﴾ "So as for he who transgressed And preferred the life of the world, Then indeed, Hellfire will be [his] refuge. But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge." [al-Nazi'at 79:37–41] And He تعالى said: ﴿وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ جَنَّتَانِ﴾ "But for he who has feared the position of his Lord are two gardens -" [al-Rahman 55:46] It is said: He is the servant who desires disobedience, and remembers the standing of Allah over him in this world, and his own standing before Him in the Hereafter, and leaves it for Allah.

The Prophet ﷺ swore that "the servant does not believe until his desire follows what I have brought,"[6] so that his desire is the follower and not the followed. Whoever follows his desire, his desire is followed by him, and whoever opposes his desire to what the Messenger ﷺ brought, his desire follows him. So the believer's desire follows him, while the hypocrite, the wicked, has his desire followed by him. 548

6 Ibn Abi Asim, *al-Sunnah* (15); al-Khatib, *Tarikh Baghdad* (4/369); al-Baghawi, *Sharh al-Sunnah* (1/213); from Abd Allah ibn Amr. Al-Nawawi (*al-Arba'in*, 41) calls it hasan sahih; Ibn Rajab (*Jami' al-'Ulum wa-l-Hikam*, 2/394) disagrees, saying that its authentication is very far-fetched.

Allah تعالى has ruled that the one who follows his desire without guidance from Him is the most unjust of the unjust, and Allah عز وجل said: ﴿فَإِن لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُواْ لَكَ فَٱعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُونَ أَهْوَآءَهُمْ وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ ٱتَّبَعَ هَوَىٰهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلظَّـٰلِمِينَ﴾ "But if they do not respond to you - then know that they only follow their [own] desires. And who is more astray than one who follows his desire without guidance from Allāh? Indeed, Allāh does not guide the wrongdoing people." [al-Qasas 28:50] And you find under this address that Allah does not guide the one who follows his desire. Allah سبحانه وتعالى made what is followed two kinds, with no third for them: either what the Messenger ﷺ brought, or desire. Whoever follows one of them cannot follow the other. And Satan circles the servant to find where he may enter upon him, and he finds in him no entrance, nor road to him, except from his desire. For that reason, the one who opposes his desire makes Satan flee from his shadow. Opposing desire is possible only through desire for Allah and His reward, fear of being veiled from Him and of His punishment, and finding the sweetness of healing in opposing desire, for following it is the greatest sickness and opposing it the greatest cure.

Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd was asked: When do souls attain their wishes? He said: When their sickness becomes their cure. He was asked: And when does their sickness become their cure? He said: When they oppose their desire. The meaning of his saying "their sickness becomes their cure" is that their sickness is desire, so when they oppose it, they are healed of it by opposing it. [549]

◆ *Aspiration to Allah* ◆

As for aspiration to Allah, the desire for His Face, and yearning for the meeting with Him, it is the servant's capital, the mainstay of his affair, the support of his good life, and the root of his happiness, his success, his bliss, and the delight of his eye. For this he was created, and with it he was commanded, and for this the messengers were sent and the books were revealed. There is no soundness for the heart and no bliss except that its aspiration be to Allah - عز وجل - alone, so that He alone is what it aspires to, seeks and intends, as Allah تعالى said: ﴿فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَٱنصَبْ وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَٱرْغَب﴾ "So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for worship]. And to your Lord direct [your] longing." [al-Sharh 94:7–8] And He تعالى said: ﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَضُوا۟ مَآ ءَاتَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُۥ وَقَالُوا۟ حَسْبُنَا ٱللَّهُ سَيُؤْتِينَا ٱللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِۦ وَرَسُولُهُۥٓ إِنَّآ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ رَٰغِبُونَ﴾ "If only they had been satisfied with what Allāh and His Messenger gave them and said, "Sufficient for us is Allāh; Allāh will give us of His bounty, and [so will] His Messenger; indeed, we are desirous toward Allāh," [it would have been better for them]." [al-Tawbah 9:59] 550

Those who aspire are of three kinds: one who aspires to Allah, one who aspires to what is with Allah, and one who turns away from Allah. The lover aspires to Him; the doer of deeds aspires to what is with Him; and the one who is content with this world in place of the Hereafter turns away from Him. Whoever's aspiration is to Allah, Allah suffices him in every important matter, takes charge of him in all his affairs, repels from him what he cannot repel from himself, protects him with the protection given to a newborn child, and guards him from every affliction. Whoever prefers Allah over others, Allah prefers him over others. Whoever is for Allah, Allah is for him where he is not for himself. Whoever knows Allah, nothing is dearer to him than Him, and no aspiration remains in him for anything besides Him, except for what brings him near to Him and helps him on his journey to Him.

Among the signs of knowledge {of Allah} is awe. The more a servant's knowledge of his Lord increases, the more his awe of Him and his fear of Him increase, as Allah تعالى said: ﴿إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى ٱللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ٱلْعُلَمَٰٓؤُا۟﴾ "Only those fear Allāh, from among His servants, who have knowledge." [Fatir 35:28] That is, those who have knowledge of Him. And the Prophet

ﷺ said: "I am the most knowing of you of Allah, and the most intense of you in fear of Him."[7] Whoever knows Allah, life becomes clear for him and pleasant, everything stands in awe of him, the fear of created beings leaves him, he finds intimacy with Allah and feels estrangement from people. Knowledge bequeaths to him shame before Allah, reverence for Him, veneration, constant awareness of Him, love, reliance upon Him, turning back to Him, contentment with Him, and submission to His command. 551

It was said to al-Junayd - رحمه الله تعالى -: There are people here who say that they reach righteousness by abandoning movements. He said: These are people who speak of dropping deeds, and it is a grave matter in my view. The one who fornicates and steals is in a better state than the one who says this, for the knowers of Allah took their deeds from Allah and returned to Him in them. If I were to live a thousand years, I would not lessen anything of the deeds of righteousness.

And he said: The knower is not a knower until he is like the earth, trodden by the righteous and the wicked, and like the rain, which waters what it loves and what it does not love.

7 Al-Bukhari (6101, 7301) and Muslim (2356), from the hadith of Aisha.

◆ *The life of the heart, and the true lover* ◆

In sum, the life of the heart is with Allah; it has no life without that, ever. When the tongue accords with the heart in His remembrance, the heart accords with what the Beloved intends from it; it regards as small the much of its own words and deeds, and regards as much the little of His kindness and gentleness. It embraces obedience and parts from disobedience, and goes out entirely to its beloved, so that nothing of it remains for itself. Its heart is filled with His magnification, His veneration, and the preferring of His good pleasure; patience away from Him becomes hard for it, and it has no rest without remembering Him, aspiring to Him, and yearning for the meeting with Him. It finds no intimacy except in His remembrance and the guarding of His limits, and it prefers Him over all others. That is the true lover. 552

Al-Junayd said: I heard al-Harith al-Muhasibi say: Love is your inclining to something with your whole self, then your preferring it over yourself, your wife and your wealth, then your agreeing with it in secret and in public, then your knowing of your shortcoming in loving it.

It was said: Love is a fire in the heart that burns from the lover everything other than what the Beloved intends. It was also said: Rather, it is the exertion of effort for the Beloved's good pleasure, and it is not sound except by going out from the seeing of love to the seeing of the Beloved. ... Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak said: Whoever is given something of love but is not given the like of it of fear, is deceived.

Yahya ibn Mu'adh said: A mustard seed's weight of love is dearer to me than seventy years of worship without love. 553

Abu Bakr al-Kattani said: A question about love arose in Makkah in the days of the season, and the shaykhs spoke about it. Al-Junayd was the youngest of them in age. They said: Bring what you have, O Iraqi! He bowed his head, his eyes shed tears, and then he said: A servant gone from himself, joined to the remembrance of his Lord, standing in fulfilment of His rights, looking at Him with his heart. The lights of His very being (هويته)[8] have burned his heart, and his drink from the cup of His affection has become pure. If he speaks, it is by Allah; if he utters, it is from Allah; if

8 *Huwiyyah* is a term of the Sufis and the philosophers for the divine Selfhood, "His very being".

he moves, it is by Allah's command; and if he is silent, he is with Allah. So he is by Allah, for Allah, and with Allah. The shaykhs wept and said: There is nothing to add to this. May Allah reward you, O crown of the knowers!

All the knowers are agreed that love is not sound except through accord ... And the folk agreed that love is not sound except through the oneness of the beloved.

Yahya ibn Mu'adh said: He is not truthful who claims love of Him and then does not guard His limits. [554]

◆ *Love is a tree in the heart* ◆

Love is a tree in the heart: its roots are lowliness before the beloved, its trunk is knowledge of him, its branches are fear of him, its leaves are shame before him, its fruit is obedience to him, and its sustenance with which it is watered is remembrance of him. Whenever love is empty of any of this, it is deficient.

Allah - سبحانه - has described Himself as loving His believing servants, and that they love Him; and He informed that they are the more intense in love for Allah. And He described Himself as the Most Affectionate (الودود), and He is the Beloved (الحبيب). Al-Bukhari said it. Affection (الود) is pure love; so He has affection for His believing servants, and they have affection for Him.

Al-Bukhari reported in his *Sahih*, from the hadith of Anas ibn Malik - رضي الله عنه -, who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, relating from his Lord - تبارك وتعالى -, that He said: "Whoever humiliates a friend of Mine has declared war on Me. My servant draws near to Me with nothing like the performance of what I made obligatory upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with voluntary acts until I love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. By Me he hears, by Me he sees, by Me he strikes, and by Me he walks. If he asks Me, I shall surely give him; and if he seeks refuge with Me, I shall surely grant him refuge. I have not hesitated over anything I am doing as I hesitate over taking the soul of My believing servant: he dislikes death, and I dislike causing him distress, yet he must have it."[9] 555

Consider the perfection of accord in dislike: how it required the Lord تعالى to dislike distressing His servant by death, since the servant disliked what angers his Lord! And the perfection of accord in will: how it required His according with him in the fulfilment of his needs, the answering of his requests, and the granting of refuge from what he sought refuge from! As Aishah - رضي الله عنها - said to the Prophet ﷺ: I see

9 Al-Bukhari (6502), from the hadith of Abu Hurayrah. The print gives it as the hadith of Anas; the Arabic editor says that Anas's version is in al-Tabarani, Abu Nu'aym's *al-Hilyah* (8/318–319) and al-Bayhaqi's *al-Asma' wa-l-Sifat* (p. 121), by a chain with a weak narrator, Sadaqah ibn Abd Allah.

nothing but that your Lord hastens in your desire (هواك).[10] 556

And consider this "by" in His saying: By Me he hears, by Me he sees, by Me he strikes, by Me he walks, how you find it making clear the meaning of His saying: I am his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees... up to its end! If he hears, he hears by Allah; if he sees, he sees by Him; if he strikes, he strikes by Him; and if he walks, he walks by Him. ... And consider how He made His love for His servant depend on his performance of his obligations and, after them, on drawing near to Him by voluntary acts, and nothing else. In this is a consolation for the one who claims love of Him without that: that he is not of its people, and has with him only vain wishes and false claims.

10 Al-Bukhari (4788) and Muslim (1464), from Aisha.

◆ *Loved in heaven, and love for His sake* ◆

And in the two *Sahih*s, from the hadith of Abu Hurayrah - رضي الله عنه -: that the Prophet ﷺ said: "When Allah loves a servant, He calls Jibril: Allah loves so-and-so, so love him! Then the people of heaven love him, then acceptance is placed for him on earth."[11] ... 557

And in the two *Sahih*s, from the hadith of Anas - رضي الله عنه -: that a man asked the Prophet ﷺ about the Hour. He said: "And what have you prepared for it?" He said: Nothing, except that I love Allah and His Messenger! He said: "You are with the one you love." Anas - رضي الله عنه - said: We were not pleased with anything as we were pleased with the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: "You are with the one you love." Anas said: And I love the Prophet ﷺ, Abu Bakr and Umar, and I hope to be with them through my love of them, even though I have not done their deeds.[12] 558

This love for Allah necessarily requires love for the sake of Allah, for part of loving the Beloved is loving for His sake and hating for His sake. 559

Muslim reported in his *Sahih*, from the hadith of Abu Hurayrah - رضي الله عنه -, who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah تعالى says on the Day of Resurrection: Where are those who loved one another for My majesty? Today I shall shade them in My shade, on a day when there is no shade but My shade."[13]

And in *al-Muwatta'*, from the hadith of Abu Idris al-Khawlani, who said: I entered the mosque of Damascus, and there was a youth with brilliant teeth, with the people around him. When they differed over anything, they referred it to him and issued forth from his opinion. I asked about him, and they said: This is Mu'adh ibn Jabal! The next day I went out early, and I found that he had preceded me in going early, and I found him praying. I waited for him until he finished his prayer, then I came to him from in front of his face, greeted him, and then said: By Allah, I love you for the sake of Allah. He said: By Allah? I said: By Allah! He said: By Allah? I said: By Allah! So he took hold of the fold of my cloak, pulled me to him, and said: Rejoice, for I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

11 Al-Bukhari (6040) and Muslim (2637).

12 Al-Bukhari (6167) and Muslim (2639).

13 Muslim (2566).

"Allah تبارك وتعالى said: My love is due for those who love one another for My sake, those who sit together for My sake, those who visit one another for My sake, and those who give generously to one another for My sake."[14] 560

And in *Sahih Muslim*, from the hadith of Abu Hurayrah - رضي الله عنه -, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "A man visited a brother of his in another town, and Allah posted an angel on his path. When he came upon him, he said: Where do you intend to go? He said: I intend a brother of mine in this town. He said: Do you have some favour with him that you are tending? He said: No! Except that I love him for the sake of Allah تعالى. He said: Then I am the messenger of Allah to you: that Allah has loved you as you loved him for His sake."[15] 562

And in *Sahih Muslim*, from the hadith of Abu Hurayrah - رضي الله عنه -: that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "By the One in whose hand is my soul! You will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I not guide you to something which, if you do it, you will love one another? Spread the greeting of peace among you."[16] 563

14 Malik, *al-Muwatta'* (2/953–954); also Ahmad (5/229, 233).

15 Muslim (2567).

16 Muslim (54).

◆ *The Beloved does not punish His beloved* ◆

Even if there were nothing in the love of Allah except that it saves its lover from His punishment, it would be fitting for the servant never to take anything in exchange for it. 564

One of the scholars was asked: Where do you find in the Qur'an that the Beloved does not punish His beloved? He said: In the saying of Allah تعالى: ﴿وَقَالَتِ ٱلۡيَهُودُ وَٱلنَّصَٰرَىٰ نَحۡنُ أَبۡنَٰٓؤُاْ ٱللَّهِ وَأَحِبَّٰٓؤُهُۥۚ قُلۡ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُم بِذُنُوبِكُمۖ﴾ "But the Jews and the Christians say, "We are the children of Allāh and His beloved." Say, "Then why does He punish you for your sins?"" [al-Ma'idah 5:18]

It suffices as an immediate reward for turning to Allah that Allah - سبحانه وتعالى - turns the hearts of His servants toward the one who turns to Him, just as He turns their hearts away from the one who turns away from Him; for the hearts of the servants are in Allah's hand, not in their own hands. 565

Since hearts are naturally disposed to love the one who does good to them, and every good that reaches the servant is from Allah - عز وجل -, as Allah تعالى said: ﴿وَمَا بِكُم مِّن نِّعۡمَةٖ فَمِنَ ٱللَّهِ﴾ "And whatever you have of favor - it is from Allāh." [al-Nahl 16:53] then none is more contemptible than the one who occupies his heart with love of other than Him, to the exclusion of Him. 566

Among the best of what is asked of Allah - عز وجل - is His love, the love of those who love Him, and the love of a deed that brings one near to His love. Among the most comprehensive of that is to say: "O Allah! I ask You for Your love, the love of those who love You, and the love of a deed that will bring me near to Your love. O Allah! Whatever You have provided me of what I love, make it a strength for me in what You love; and whatever You have withheld from me of what I do not love, make it a leisure for me in what You love. O Allah! Make Your love dearer to me than my family, my wealth, and cold water to the thirsty. O Allah! Make me beloved to You, to Your angels, Your prophets, Your messengers and Your righteous servants. And make me one of those who love You, and love Your angels, Your prophets and Your righteous servants. O Allah! Give life to my heart with Your love, and make me for You as You love. O Allah! Make me love You with all my heart, and please You with all my

effort. O Allah! Make all my love for You, and all my striving in what pleases You.[17]

This supplication is the pavilion of the tent of Islam, by which it stands. It is the reality of the testimony that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those who uphold the reality of that are: ﴿بِشَهَٰدَٰتِهِمۡ قَآئِمُونَ﴾ "in their testimonies upright" [al-Ma'arij 70:33]. And Allah سبحانه has made Himself known to His servants through His names, His attributes and His acts in a way that necessitates their love for Him. For hearts are naturally disposed to love perfection and the one in whom it resides, and Allah - سبحانه وتعالى - has absolute perfection in every respect, with no deficiency in it in any way at all. He سبحانه is the Beautiful, than whom none is more beautiful. Indeed, were the beauty of all creation to be in one man among them, and were all of them to have that beauty, their beauty would have no proportion whatever to the beauty of Allah; rather the proportion would be less than the proportion of a very weak lamp to the body of the sun. ﴿وَلِلَّهِ ٱلۡمَثَلُ ٱلۡأَعۡلَىٰ﴾ "and for Allāh is the highest attribute." [al-Nahl 16:60] 567

17 The Arabic editor did not find the supplication in this form and thinks that the author joined passages related separately; he gives them in al-Tirmidhi (3235, 3491, 3490).

◆ *The Beautiful* ◆

Among His most beautiful names is the Beautiful (الجميل). And who has a better right to beauty than the One from whose handiwork comes every beauty that exists? So to Him belong the beauty of the Essence, the beauty of the attributes, the beauty of the acts, and the beauty of the names. All His names are most beautiful, all His attributes are perfection, and all His acts are beautiful. No human being is able to look upon His majesty and His beauty in this abode; but when they see Him سبحانه in the Gardens of Eden, seeing Him will make them forget the bliss they are in, and they will then turn to nothing other than Him. And were it not for the veil of light upon His Face, the splendours of His Face - تبارك وتعالى - would burn whatever His sight reached of His creation, as in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, from the hadith of Abu Musa - رضي الله عنه - who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood among us and gave five statements. He said: "Allah does not sleep, and it is not fitting for Him to sleep. He lowers the scale and raises it. The deeds of the night are raised to Him before the deeds of the day, and the deeds of the day before the deeds of the night. His veil is light; were He to remove it, the splendours of His Face would burn whatever His sight reached of His creation."[18] 568

Among the supplications of the Prophet ﷺ was: "I ask You for the pleasure of looking upon Your Face, and for yearning for the meeting with You." Imam Ahmad, al-Nasa'i and Ibn Hibban in his *Sahih* mentioned it.[19] 572

So hear now the matter of His friends and His beloved ones at the meeting with Him, then choose for yourself:

أنت القتيل بكل من أحببته ◆ فاختر لنفسك في الهوى من تصطفي

You're slain by everyone you love; then choose and take
in love the one you'd select for your own sake.

You are slain by everyone you have loved ◆ so choose for yourself in love whom you select

Hisham ibn Hassan said, from al-Hasan: When the people of Paradise

18 It is in Muslim (179), from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari; the Arabic editor did not find it in al-Bukhari.

19 Al-Nasa'i (3/54–55) and Ibn Hibban (1971). The Arabic editor says it is a sahih hadith.

look at Allah تعالى, they forget the bliss of Paradise.

◆ *Looking upon His Face* ◆

Abu Sulayman al-Darani said: If the people of love - or he said: of knowledge - had nothing but this verse: ﴿وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ﴾ "[Some] faces, that Day, will be radiant, Looking at their Lord." [al-Qiyamah 75:22–23] it would suffice them. ... 576

And in the two *Sahih*s, from the hadith of ... Abu Sa'id al-Khudri - رضي الله عنه -, who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah تعالى says to the people of Paradise: O people of Paradise! They say: At Your service, our Lord, at Your pleasure, and all good is in Your hands! He says: Are you pleased? They say: How could we not be pleased, when You have given us what You have not given to any of Your creation! He says: Shall I not give you better than that? They say: O Lord! And what is better than that? He says: I shall make My good pleasure descend upon you, so I shall never be angry with you after it."[20]

And in the *Sahih*, the *Sunan* and the *Musnad*s, from the hadith of ... Suhayb - رضي الله عنه -, from the Prophet ﷺ, who said: "When the people of Paradise enter Paradise, a caller calls out: O people of Paradise! You have an appointment with Allah that He wishes to fulfil for you. They say: What is it?! Has He not whitened our faces, made our scales heavy, admitted us to Paradise and saved us from the Fire? Then the veil is lifted, and they look upon Him. By Allah! Allah has given them nothing dearer to them than looking upon Him, nor more delightful to their eyes."[21] 577

And in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, from the hadith of Jarir ibn Abd Allah, who said: We were sitting with the Prophet ﷺ when he looked at the moon on the night of the full moon and said: "You will see your Lord just as you see this moon; you will have no difficulty in seeing Him. So if you are able not to be overcome in a prayer before the rising of the sun and before its setting, then do so."[22]

Abd al-Wahid ibn Zayd said, from al-Hasan: If the worshippers knew that they would not see their Lord in the Hereafter, their souls would melt away in this world. ... 588

20 Al-Bukhari (6549, 7518) and Muslim (2829).

21 Muslim (181).

22 Al-Bukhari (7434) and Muslim (633).

◆ *Yearning for the meeting* ◆

A man stood before al-Shibli[23] and said: Which patience is hardest upon the patient? He said: Patience in Allah. The questioner said: No! He said: Patience for Allah. He said: No! He said: Then patience with Allah. He said: No! He said: Then what is it? He said: Patience away from Allah. Al-Shibli gave a cry that almost took his soul. 589

Fear keeps you far from disobeying Him, hope moves you to obey Him, and love makes you yearn for Him with yearning. When Allah - سبحانه - knew that the hearts of those who yearn for Him are not at rest except in meeting Him, He set a term for the meeting, as a calm for their hearts, and Allah تعالى said: ﴿مَن كَانَ يَرْجُواْ لِقَآءَ ٱللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ ٱللَّهِ لَـَٔاتٍ﴾ "Whoever should hope for the meeting with Allāh - indeed, the term [decreed by] Allāh is coming." [al-Ankabut 29:5]

يا من شكا شوقه من طول فرقته ◆ اصبر لعلك تلقى من تحب غدا

You who of yearning through long separation complain,
be patient: tomorrow you may meet your love again.

O you who complain of your yearning from the length of separation
be patient, perhaps you will meet tomorrow the one you love

The truthful lover, whenever he draws nearer to his beloved, grows in yearning for him.

وأعظم ما يكون الشوق يوما ◆ إذا دنت الخيام من الخيام

The greatest yearning that can ever appear
is on a day when tent to tent draws near.

And the greatest that yearning can be on a day ◆ is when the tents draw near the tents

The most delightful thing to the eye of the lover is his being alone in secret with his beloved. One who saw our Shaykh[24] in the prime of his affair told me that he went out into the open country early in the morning, and when he reached the wide plain he sighed deeply, and then cited the saying of the poet: 590

23 Abu Bakr al-Shibli (d. 334 AH), the Sufi of Baghdad.

24 "Our Shaykh" is the author's teacher, Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah.

وأخرج من بين البيوت لعلني ◆ أحدث عنك القلب بالسر خاليا

I go out from among the houses, apart,
that I may speak of you, in secret, to my heart.

I go out from among the houses, that perhaps
I may speak of you to my heart, in secret, alone

Yearning carries the lover to haste in the good pleasure of his beloved and to hurry to it at once, even if his ruin lies in it. ﴿وَمَآ أَعۡجَلَكَ عَن قَوۡمِكَ يَٰمُوسَىٰ قَالَ هُمۡ أُوْلَآءِ عَلَىٰٓ أَثَرِي وَعَجِلۡتُ إِلَيۡكَ رَبِّ لِتَرۡضَىٰ﴾ "And what made you hasten from your people, O Moses?" He said, "They are close upon my tracks, and I hastened to You, my Lord, that You be pleased." [Ta Ha 20:83–84] One of them said: He meant yearning for You, but concealed it in the word "good pleasure".

Among the signs of true love is that the lover's joy is not complete except through his beloved, and so long as he is absent from him, his whole life is troubled. 591

Al-Junayd said: I heard al-Sari say: Yearning is the most majestic station of the knower, once he has realised it. And when he has realised yearning, he is distracted from everything that occupies him away from the one he yearns for. 592

An old woman had one absent, and he came back from a journey. Her family showed joy and gladness at him, and she began to weep. It was said to her: What is this weeping? She said: The arrival of this youth reminded me of the day of arrival before Allah. 593

Ibn Abi al-Hawari - رحمه الله - said: Abu Sulayman al-Darani - رحمه الله, while I was present - was asked: What is the nearest thing by which one draws near to Allah - عز وجل -? He wept, then said: Is one like me asked about this? The nearest thing by which one draws near to Him is that He looks into your heart and you want from this world and the Hereafter nothing but Him.

◆ *If the ambition falls short* ◆

If your base ambition falls short of leaving the lewd acts out of love for this highest Beloved, and you are not at that level, then leave them out of love for the women whom Allah described in His Book, and for whose union in the Garden of Refuge He sent His Messenger as a caller. Some of their attributes and the pleasure of union with them have already been mentioned. And if your ambition falls short of them, and you are not a match for seeking their hand, and your soul calls you to prefer what is here over them, then be on guard against His punishment, in this world and the next. And know that punishments differ: at times they are hastened, at times delayed, and at times Allah brings both together upon the disobedient one. 594

The most severe of punishments is the punishment of the removal of faith, and below it the punishment of the death of the heart, and the erasing of the pleasure of remembrance, recitation, supplication and intimate converse with Him, and perhaps the punishment of the heart creeps in it as darkness creeps, until the heart is filled with it and the insight goes blind. The lightest of punishments is what befalls the body in this world, and lighter than that is what befalls wealth. And at times the punishment is in the gaze, in the inner sight or in the eyesight, or in both.

Ibn Abbas and Anas - رضي الله عنهم - said: A good deed has a light in the heart, an adornment in the face, strength in the body, breadth in provision and love in the hearts of creation. And an evil deed has a darkness in the heart, a blemish in the face, weakness in the body, a decrease in provision and hatred in the hearts of creation. 595

Abu Sulayman al-Darani said: Whoever is pure, it is made pure for him; whoever is turbid, it is made turbid against him; whoever does good in his night, is given sufficiency in his day; whoever does good in his day, is given sufficiency in his night; and whoever leaves a desire from his heart for Allah, Allah is too generous to punish his heart because of it. 596

◆ *The recompense is of the kind of the deed* ◆

And know that the recompense is of the kind of the deed. The heart attached to the forbidden, whenever it intends to leave it and go out from it, returns to it, and so its recompense in the intermediate realm and in the Hereafter is the same. 597

And in some of the routes of the hadith of Samurah ibn Jundab, which is in *Sahih al-Bukhari*: that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Tonight I saw: two men came to me and took me out, and I set off with them, and behold, a house built like the building of an oven, narrow at its top and wide at its bottom, with a fire kindled beneath it, and in it were men and women, naked. When the fire was kindled they rose until they almost came out, and when it died down they went back into it. I said: Who are these? He said: They are the fornicators." So consider how this punishment matches the state of their hearts in this world: for whenever they intend repentance and giving up, and going out of the oven of the fire of appetite into the open space of repentance, they are thrust back into it, and return after almost having come out.[25]

25 Al-Bukhari (7047).

◆ *What desire is* ◆

Desire (الهوى) is the inclination of the natural disposition to what suits it. This inclination was created in man out of the necessity of his survival. For were it not for his inclination to food, drink and intercourse, he would not eat, drink or have intercourse. So desire is commendable for him for what he wants, just as anger repels from him what harms him. Therefore desire should not be censured absolutely, nor praised absolutely, just as anger is neither censured absolutely nor praised absolutely. What is censured is the excessive part of the two kinds, which is what exceeds bringing benefits and repelling harms. 629

Since the usual case of one who obeys his desire, his appetite and his anger is that he does not stop in it at the limit of what benefits him, the censure of desire, appetite and anger was given without restriction, because of the generality of the prevalence of harm; for it is rare that anyone intends justice in that and stops at it, just as among temperaments the temperament that is balanced in every respect is rare; rather one of the humours and qualities must predominate in it. So the zeal of the adviser to balance the powers of appetite and anger in every respect is like the zeal of the physician to balance the temperament in every respect, and this is a thing whose existence is impossible except in the case of individuals of the world. For that reason Allah did not mention desire in His Book except to censure it, and likewise in the Sunnah it came only as censured, except what came of it qualified, as in his saying ﷺ: "None of you believes until his desire follows what I have brought."[26]

Its unrestricted form calls to present pleasure without thought of the consequence, and urges the attainment of appetites at once, even if they are a cause of the greatest pains, now and later. For this world has a consequence before the consequence of the Hereafter, and desire blinds its possessor from observing it. Manliness, religion and reason forbid a pleasure that is followed by pain and an appetite that bequeaths regret. Each of them says to the soul when it wants that: Do not do it! And obedience belongs to the one who prevails. ... 630

When the one charged with duties was tried by desire, among all the

26 See note 6.

beasts, and events occurred to him at every time, two judges were placed in them: the judge of reason and the judge of religion; and he was commanded to refer the events of desire always to these two judges, and to submit to their ruling. And he should train himself to repel the desire whose consequences are safe, so that he continues by that in leaving what harms in its consequences.

Let the sagacious man know that those who are addicted to appetites come to a state in which they take no pleasure in them, and yet they are unable to leave them, because they have become for them like the livelihood without which they cannot be. ... And were the rust of desire to leave him, he would know that he had striven from where he decreed happiness, grieved from where he supposed joy, and was pained from where he sought pleasure. So he is like the bird deceived by the grain of the trap: it neither eats the grain, nor frees itself from what it has fallen into. 631

◆ *How he may free himself* ◆

If it is said: How can the one who has fallen into this free himself from it?

It is said: He can free himself, with Allah's help and His granting him success, by several things:

The first of them: the resolve of a free man who is jealous for himself and over himself.

The second: a gulp of patience, whose bitterness his soul endures for that hour.

The third: strength of soul that gives him courage to drink that gulp; and courage is all patience for an hour, and the best life a servant ever attained was through his patience.

The fourth: his observing the goodness of the outcome, and the healing, through that gulp. 632

The fifth: his observing the pain that exceeds the pleasure of obeying his desire.

The sixth: his keeping his standing with Allah تعالى and in the hearts of His servants, which is better and more beneficial for him than the pleasure of falling into desire.

The seventh: his preferring the pleasure of chastity, its might and its sweetness, over the pleasure of disobedience.

The ninth: reflecting that he was not created for desire, but was prepared for a great matter, which he attains only by disobeying desire, as was said:

قد هيؤوك لأمر لو فطنت له ◆ فاربأ بنفسك أن ترعى مع الهمل

They've readied you for a matter, had you eyes to see;
so rise above grazing with herds that wander free.

They have prepared you for a matter, had you grasped it
so hold yourself aloft from grazing with the neglected herds

The twenty-fourth: that desire is the enclosure of Jahannam surrounding it, so whoever falls into it falls into it, as in the two *Sahih*s from the Prophet ﷺ, who said: "Paradise is surrounded by disliked things, and the Fire is surrounded by appetites."[27] 637

27 Al-Bukhari (6487) and Muslim (2823), from the hadith of Abu Hurayrah.

◆ *The idol in the heart* ◆

The fortieth: that tawhid and following desire are opposites, for desire is an idol, and every servant has an idol in his heart according to his desire. Allah sent His messengers only to break the idols, and to worship Him alone, who has no partner. What Allah - سبحانه - intends is not the breaking of the embodied idols while leaving the idols that are in the heart; rather what is intended is breaking them first from the heart. 643

Al-Hasan ibn Ali al-Mutawwi'i said: The idol of every person is his desire, so whoever breaks it by opposing it deserves the name of chivalry (الفتوة). And consider the saying of al-Khalil to his people: ﴿مَا هَـٰذِهِ ٱلتَّمَاثِيلُ ٱلَّتِىٓ أَنتُمْ لَهَا عَـٰكِفُونَ﴾ "What are these statues to which you are devoted?" [al-Anbiya' 21:52] how you find it matching the statues that the heart desires, and to which it devotes itself, and worships besides Allah.

◆ *The slave and the king* ◆

The forty-seventh: that desire is slavery in the heart, a collar on the neck and a shackle on the foot, and its follower is a captive to everyone of evil dominion. Whoever opposes it is freed from his slavery and becomes free; he removes the collar from his neck and the shackle from his foot, and becomes like a man wholly devoted to one man, after having been a man in whom were partners at odds.[28] 646

صاحب الشهوة عبد فإذا ◆ غلب الشهوة أضحى ملكا

The man of appetite's a slave, but when he wins
the mastery of appetite, his kingship begins.

The possessor of appetite is a slave, but when ◆ he overcomes appetite he becomes a king

The forty-eighth: that opposing desire places the servant in the station of one who, if he swore by Allah, He would fulfil it for him, and He grants him needs many times over what he lost of his desire. He is like one who turned away from a dung pellet and was given a pearl in exchange. But the follower of desire loses his immediate and later benefits and the pleasant life, with no proportion at all to what he gained of his desire. So consider the freedom of the hand of Yusuf al-Siddiq - عليه الصلاة والسلام -, his tongue, his foot and his soul after his going out of prison, when he restrained himself from the forbidden. 647

28 An allusion to al-Zumar 39:29.

◆ *In the shade of the Throne* ◆

The forty-ninth: that opposing desire brings the nobility of this world and the nobility of the Hereafter, outward might and inward might, while following it lowers the servant in this world and the Hereafter, and humbles him outwardly and inwardly. When Allah gathers the people on one plain, a caller will call out: Let the people of the gathering know who are the people of generosity today! Let the God-fearing stand! So they stand to the place of honour, while the followers of desire hang their heads in the place of standing, in the heat of desire, its sweat and its pain, and those are in the shade of the Throne. 648

The fiftieth: that when you consider the seven whom Allah - عز وجل - shades in the shade of His Throne on a day when there is no shade but His shade, you find that they obtained that shade only by opposing desire. For the powerful, able ruler cannot be just except by opposing his desire. And the youth who prefers the worship of his Lord over the caller of his youth, were it not for his opposing desire, would not be able to do that. The man whose heart is attached to the mosques was driven to that only by opposing the desire that calls him to places of pleasures. The one who gives charity, concealing his charity from his left hand, were it not for his subduing his desire, would not be able to do that. And the one whom the beautiful, noble woman called, and he feared Allah عز وجل and opposed his desire; and the one who remembered Allah in solitude and his eyes overflowed from fear of Him: only his opposing desire brought him to that. So the heat of the place of standing, its sweat and its intensity have no way upon them on the Day of Resurrection, while the people of desire, the heat and sweat have reached every degree in them, and they are waiting, after this, to enter the prison of desire. So Allah سبحانه وتعالى is the One asked to protect us from the desires of our souls that command to evil, and to make our desire follow what He loves and is pleased with. Indeed He is able to do all things.[29]

29 These are the last words of the book.

Glossary

chivalry (*futuwwah*, الفتوة): noble, generous manliness.

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

Iblis: Satan.

Jahannam: Hell.

Jibril: Gabriel, the angel of revelation.

mujahid: one who strives in the cause of Allah.

sahih: "sound"; the highest grade of hadith.

Sunnah: the way of the Prophet ﷺ: his words, deeds and approvals.

tawhid: the oneness of Allah; worshipping Him alone.

umrah: the lesser pilgrimage to Makkah.



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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