

The Disease of Desires and Passionate Love

Shaykh ul-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah rahimahullaah

Extracted from “Diseases of the Hearts & their Cures”

Compiled by Ibraaheem bin ‘Abdullaah al-Haazimee

Miserliness and jealousy are sicknesses that lead to the soul hating that which would benefit it, and its loving that which would harm it. This is why jealousy was mentioned alongside hatred and resentment in the preceding ahaadeeth. As for the sickness of desire and passionate love then this is the soul loving that which would harm it and coupled with this is its hatred of that which would benefit it.

Passionate love is a psychological sickness, and when its effects become noticeable on the body, it becomes a sickness that afflicts the mind also. Either by afflicting the mind by the likes of melancholy, or afflicting the body through weakness and emaciation. But the purpose here is to discuss its affect on the heart, for passionate love is the fundament that makes the soul covet that which would harm it, similar is the one weak of body who covets that which harms it, and if he is not satiated by that then he is grieved, and if he is satiated then his sickness increases. The same applies to the heart afflicted with this love, for it is harmed by its connection to the loved, either by seeing, touching, hearing, even think about it. And if he were to curb the love then the heart is hurt and grieved by this, and if he given is to the desire then the sickness becomes stronger and becomes a means through which the grievance is increased.

In the hadeeth there occurs, *“Indeed Allaah shelters His believing servant from the world just as one of you shelter your sick ones from food and drink (that would harm them).”* [1]

In the hadeeth concerning the saving of Moosa reported by Wahb[2], which is recorded by Imaam Ahmad in az-Zuhd, *“Allaah says: ‘Indeed I drive away My friends from the delights of this world and its opulence and comfort just as the compassionate shepherd drives away his camel from the dangerous grazing lands. And indeed I make them avoid its tranquility and livelihood, just as the compassionate shepherd makes his camel to avoid the resting-places wherein it would be easy prey. This is not because I consider them to be insignificant, but so that they may complete their portion of My Kindness in safety and abundance, the delights of the world will not attract him and neither would desires overcome him.’”*

Therefore the only cure for the sick lies in his removing the sickness by removing this blameworthy love from his heart.

People are divided into two opinions concerning passionate love: One group says that it falls into the category of intentions and wishes, this being the famous

opinion. Another groups says that it falls into the category of imagination and fantasies and that it is a corruption of the imagination since it causes one to depict the one who is loved in other than his true reality. This group went on to say: “And this is why Allaah has not been described with passionate love (ishk) and neither that He passionately loves (ya’shik) because He is far removed from this, and one cannot be praised who has these corrupt thoughts.”

As for the first group, then from them are those who said: “He is described with passionate love (ishk) because it is a complete and perfect love and Allaah loves (yuhib).” And it is reported in the narration of ‘Abdul Waahid bin Zayd that He said, “The servant will always continue to draw closer to me, loving Me and I loving him (A’shiquhoo).” This is the saying of some of the Soofis but the majority do not apply this word to Allaah, because passionate love is a love exceeding the proper bounds, as for the Love of Allaah then it has no end and cannot exceed the proper bounds. Passionate love is to be considered blameworthy without any exceptions, it is not to be praised when it is directed towards the Creator or created because it is a love that exceeds the proper bounds.

This is also true because the word ‘passionate love’ is only employed with regards to a man loving a woman or child (or vice versa), it is not employed in things such as the love of one’s family, property or status, just as it is not employed with regards to the love of the Prophets and the righteous. Commonly, you will find this word being mentioned alongside a forbidden action, such as loving the woman who is not lawful for him, or loving a child joined with the unlawful glance and touch and other such unlawful actions.

As for the love of a man for his wife or slave-girl which leads him out of the folds of justice such that he does unlawful things for her and leaves what is obligatory – as commonly happens – even to the extent that he may oppress his son born of his old wife due to this love of his new wife, or to the extent that he will do things to keep her happy that would harm his religion and worldly life. For example his singling her out for inheritance that she does not deserve, or that he gives her family authority and property that exceeds the limits set by Allaah, or he goes to excesses in spending on her, or he makes unlawful things possible for her which harms his religion and worldly life. This passionate love is forbidden with regards to one who is permissible for him, so how would it be with regards for one who has passionate love for someone who is unlawful or with regards to two men? For this contains a corruption the extent of which none can assess except the Lord of the servants; it is a sickness that corrupts the religion and objectives of the one who possesses it, then it corrupts his intelligence and then his body. Allaah, the Most High, says,

Then do not be soft in speech, lest in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire, but speak in an honourable manner.[3]

There are some whose hearts contain the disease of desire and whose perceptions are only skin deep. When the object of the desire submits, the sickness is satiated,

and this satiation strengthens the desire and pursuit of the object and hence strengthens the sickness. This is in contrast to the one whose objective is not met, for this failure results in removing the satiation that would strengthen the sickness and thereby the desire is weakened as is the love. This is because the person definitely intends that there be action accompanying his desire, for otherwise all his desire would be just whisperings of the soul, unless there is some speech or looking accompanying this.

As for the one who is afflicted with this passionate love but holds back and is patient, then indeed Allaah will reward him for his taqwaa as occurs in the hadeeth: *“That the one who passionately loves someone yet holds back, conceals this and is patient, then dies you this, will be a martyr.”* [4] This hadeeth is known to be the report of Yahya al-Qataat from Mujaahid from Ibn ‘Abbaas from the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam but it is problematic and such a hadeeth is not to be depended upon.

But it is known from the evidences of the Sharee‘ah that if one were to hold back from performing that which is unlawful, be it looking, speaking or acting, and he conceals this and does not articulate it so as not to fall into that which is prohibited and he is patient in his obedience to Allaah and keeping away from disobedience to Allaah, despite the pain that his heart feels due to passionate love, (similar to the case of the one who is patient through a calamity), then indeed this person would gain the same reward as those who have feared Allaah and been patient.

Verily, he who fears Allaah and is patient, then surely Allaah makes not the reward of the doers of good to be lost.[5]

This holds true for the disease of envy and all other sicknesses that afflict the heart. So when the soul pursues that which would anger Allaah, and the person prevents himself from this, fearing Allaah, then he is included in His saying,

But as for him who feared the standing before His Lord, and restrained himself from impure evil desires, and lusts. Verily, Paradise will be his abode.[6]

When the soul loves something, it will do all that it can to attain it, so the one who does this out of having a blameworthy love or hatred then this action of his would be sinful. For example his hating a person due to envying him and thereby harming whosoever is linked to that person – either by preventing his rights or by showing them enmity, or his doing something that is commanded by Allaah but he does it due to his desires and not for the sake of Allaah.

These types of sicknesses are commonly found in the heart. The person can hate something and due to this hate, love a great many things due to mere whims and fancies. As one poet affected by this said,

"For the sake of a Sudanese girl he loved Sudan to the point that he loved the black dogs due to his love of her".

So he loved a black girl, and therefore loved all types of black even the blackness of dogs! All of this is a sickness in the heart with regards to its imagination, fantasies and desires. We ask Allaah that He eliminate all of the illnesses from our hearts, and we seek refuge with Allaah from evil manners, desires and sicknesses.

The heart has only been created for the worship of Allaah, and this is the natural disposition (fitrah) upon which Allaah created His servants as the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, *"Every new-born child is born upon the natural disposition and it is his parents that make him a Jew, Christian or a Magian, as an animal produces a perfect young animal, do you see any part of its body amputated?"* Then Aboo Hurayrah, radiyallaahu 'anhu, said, recite if you wish the saying of Allaah,

The Fitrah of Allaah with which He has created mankind. No change is there in the creation of Allaah.[7] [Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim].

So Allaah has made the natural disposition of His servants to love Him and worship Him Alone, so if the natural disposition was to be left as it is without corrupting it, then it would be cognizant of Allaah, loving Him Alone; but the natural disposition does become corrupted due to the sickness of the heart – such as the parents making it a Jew or a Christian – even though this be by the Will and Predecree of Allaah, just like the body is altered by amputation. But even after this it is possible for the heart to return to the natural disposition if Allaah makes this easy for the one who does his utmost to return it to the natural disposition.

The Messengers were sent to affirm and re-establish the natural disposition and to perfect it, not to alter it. So when the heart loves Allaah Alone, making the religion sincerely for Him, it will not be tried with this passionate love (directed to him) his love of Allaah Alone, making the religion sincerely for him, did not allow him to be overcome by this, rather Allaah said,

Thus it was, that We might turn away from him evil and illegal sexual intercourse. Surely he was one of Our chosen, guided slaves.[8]

As for the wife of al-'Azeez, it was because she was and her nation were polytheists that she was afflicted with passionate love. No one, and no one is afflicted with passionate love except that this diminishes his singling out Allaah Alone for worship and his faith. The heart that repents to Allaah, fearing Him, has two routes by which it can remove this passionate love:

1) Repenting to Allaah and loving Him, for indeed this is more satisfying and purer than anything else, and nothing will be left to love along side Allaah.

2) Fearing Allaah, for indeed fear is the opposite of passionate love and removes it.

So everyone who loves something, with passion or otherwise, then this love can be removed by loving that which is more beloved to compete with it.[9] This love can also be removed by fearing the occurrence of a harm that is more hateful to one than leaving this love. So when Allaah is more beloved to the servant than anything else, and more feared by him than anything else, then he will not fall into passionate love or find any love that would compete with his love of Allaah, except in the case of negligence or at a time when this love and fear has become weak by his leaving some of the obligatory duties and by performing some of the prohibited actions. For indeed faith increases with obedience and decreases with disobedience, so each time a servant obeys Allaah out of love and fear, and leaves a prohibited action out of love and fear, his love and fear becomes stronger, and any love or fear of anything else besides Allaah will disappear from his heart.

The same is true for the sickness of the body: for the health of the body is preserved by the same, and the sickness is repressed by the opposite. The correctness of the faith in the heart is preserved by its like, meaning that which would breed faith in the heart from the beneficial knowledge and righteous action for these are its nourishment as occurs in the hadeeth of Ibn Mas'ood, reported as his saying and as a hadeeth of the Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, *"Indeed every host loves that people come to his table spread, and indeed the table spread of Allaah is the Qur'aan."*

So the Qur'aan is the table spread of Allaah.

From those things that nourish the heart are supplication at the end of the night, the times of Adhaan and Iqaamah, in his prostration, at the ends of the prayers[10] – add to this repentance. For indeed the one who repents to Allaah and then in turn Allaah forgives him, He will then give him enjoyment for an appointed time. That he takes to reciting the reported adhkaar for the day and at the time he sleeps. That he bears with patience what he is enticed with that would divert him from all of this, than Allaah will immediately aid him with a spirit from Him and write faith in his heart. That he be eager to complete the obligatory duties such as the five prayers inwardly and outwardly for they are the pillars of the religion. That his words of recourse be 'laa hawla wa laa quwwata illaa billaahi'[11] for by them the heavy burdens can be born, horrors can be overcome, and the servant be gifted up the supplication and seeking help from Allaah, for the servant will be answered as long as he is not hasty, saying: "I have supplicated and supplicated but I have not been answered." [12] That he should know that help comes with patience, that relief comes after anxiety and distress, that after every period of difficulty there follows a period a period of ease.[13] That he

knows that no prophet or one less than him was rewarded with a good end except as a result of his being patient.

And all praise and thanks are due to Allaah, the Lord of Creation. To Him belongs praise and grace for guiding us to Islaam and the Sunnah, a praise that would suffice His favours to us outwardly and inwardly, as in required for the nobility of His Face and might of His Magnificence. Abundant Peace and Blessings be upon our master, Muhammad sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and upon his family, Companions, his wives – the mothers of the believers, and all those that follow them in good until the Day of Judgement.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] A similar hadeeth to this reported by al-Bayhaqee and it is a da'eef hadeeth. (Refer to Fayd al-Qadeer).

[2] Wahb ibn Munabbih is a noble taabi'ee, but this hadeeth is reported from him directly to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and is not authentic.

[3] Soorah al-Ahzaab (33):32.

[4] A da'eef hadeeth. Refer to the discussion concerning its inauthenticity in al-Jawaab al-Kaafee and Rawdah al-Muhibbeen of Ibn al-Qayyim and Silsilah ad-Da'eefah of al-Albaanee.

[5] Soorah Yoosuf (12):90.

[6] Soorah an-Naazi'aat (79):40-41.

[7] Soorah ar-Room (30):30.

[8] Soorah Yoosuf (12):24.

[9] Refer to Rawdah al-Muhibbeen of Ibn al-Qayyim for he has a beautiful discussion concerning this.

[10] These are the times in which Allaah answers the supplications, there are authentic ahaadeeth concerning these.

[11] The Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said, "*indeed it is a treasure from the treasures of paradise.*" Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim from the hadeeth of Aboo Moosa al-Ash'aree.

[12] Reported by Muslim

[13] A hasan hadeeth reported by Ahmad and at-Tirmidhee from the hadeeth of Ibn 'Abbaas