

The Purification of the Soul: Four Poisons of the heart

(Based on the works of Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali, Ibn Al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali)

You should know, dear brothers and sisters in Islam, that all acts of disobedience are poison to the heart and cause its sickness and ruin. They result in its will running off-course, against that of Allah, and so its sickness festers and increases. It is said wrong actions kill hearts, and their degradation may lead to their becoming addicted to them. Turning away from wrong actions gives life to the hearts, and opposing your *Nafs*, i.e, one's self, is best for it.

Whoever is concerned with the health and life of his heart, must rid it of the effects of such poisons, and then protect it by avoiding new ones. If he takes any by mistake, then he should hasten to wipe out their effect by turning in repentance and seeking forgiveness from Allah, as well as by doing good deeds that will wipe out his wrong actions.

By the four poisons we mean: unnecessary talking, unrestrained glances, over-eating (too much food), and keeping bad company. Of all the poisons, these are the most widespread and have the greatest ill-effect on a heart's well-being.

***** Unnecessary Talking *****

This teaches that the Prophet (PBUH) has made the purification of faith conditional on the purification of the heart, and the purification of the heart conditional on the purification of the tongue.

In a hadith related on the authority of Mu'adh, RA, " I (Muadh) said: 'O Messenger of Allah, tell me of an act which will take me into Paradise and will keep me away from Hell-fire.' He (PBUH) said: 'You have asked me about a major matter, yet it is easy for him for whom Allah Almighty makes it easy. You should worship Allah, associating nothing with Him, you should perform *Salaat*, i.e, regular prayers; you should pay the *Zakat*, i.e, Charity; you should fast in Ramadan; and you should make *Hajj*, i.e, the pilgrimage to the House.' Then he (PBUH) said: ' Shall I not show you the gates of goodness? Fasting [which] is a shield, Charity [which] extinguishes sin as water extinguishes fire; and the praying of a man in the depths of night.' Then he (PBUH) recited : " Who forsake their beds to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of that We have bestowed on them. No soul knoweth what is kept hidden for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do". (Quran Sajdah 32:16-17)

Then he (PBUH) said: ' Shall I not tell you of the peak of the matter, its pillar, and its topmost part? ' I said: 'Yes, O Messenger of Allah.' He (PBUH) said: ' The peak of the matter is *Islam*; the pillar is *Prayer*; and its topmost part is *Jihad*.' Then he (PBUH) said: ' Shall I not tell you of the controlling of all that ? ' I said: 'Yes, O Messenger of Allah', and he took hold of his tongue and said: ' Restrain this.' I said: ' O Prophet of Allah, will what we say be held against us?' He (PBUH) said: ' May your mother be bereaved of you, Muadh! Is there anything more than the harvest of the tongues that topples people on their faces - or he said on their noses - into Hell-fire?' (Tirmidhi)

What is meant here by 'the harvest of the tongues' is the punishment for saying forbidden things. A man, through his actions and words, sows the seeds of either good or evil. On the Day of Resurrection he harvests their fruits. Those who sow

the seeds of good words and deeds harvest honour and blessings; those who sow the seeds of evil words and deeds reap only regret and remorse.

A hadith related by Abu Huraira, RA, that the Prophet (PBUH) said, "What mostly causes people to be sent to the Fire are the two openings: the mouth and the private parts." (Related by Tirmidhi)

Abu Huraira, RA, also related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "The servant speaks words, the consequences of which he does not realize, and for which he is sent down into the depths of the Fire further than the distance between the east and the west." (Related by Bukhari)

Uqba ibn Amir, RA, said: "I said: "O Messenger of Allah, what is our best way of surviving?" He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied: " Guard your tongue, make your house suffice for sheltering your privacy, and weep for your wrong actions." (Tirmidhi)

It has been related on the authority of Sahl ibn Sa'd, RA, that the Prophet (PBUH) said, " Whoever can guarantee what is between his jaws and what is between his legs, I guarantee him the Garden." (Bukhari)

It has also been related by Abu Huraira, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, " Let whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day either speak good or remain silent." (Bukhari)

Thus talking can either be good, in which case it is commendable, or bad, in which case it must be avoided.

The Prophet (PBUH) said: " Everything the children of Adam say goes against them, except for their enjoining good and forbidding evil, and remembering Allah, Glorious and Might is He." This was reported by at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah on the authority of Umm Habiba, may Allah be pleased with her.

Allah (Mighty and Sublime be He) says: " And indeed We have created man, and We know what his own self whispers to him. And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein (by Our Knowledge). (Remember!) that the two receivers (recording angels) receive (i.e, everything said and done by each human being after he or she has attained the age of puberty), one sitting on the right and one on the left (the one on the right writing his good deeds and the one on the left writing his bad deeds). Not a word does he (or she) utter, but there is '*Raqeeb un Ateed*' (i.e, a watcher by him ready to record it)." (Quran Qaaf 50: 16 - 18)

A person should beware of the utterances of his tongue, and have knowledge that his actions are not in vain, they are carefully watched and recorded by honourable angels who are with him at all times.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, RA, said: "By Allah, besides Whom no god exists, nothing deserves a long prison sentence more than my tongue." He also used to say: "O tongue, say good and you will profit; desist from saying evil things and you will be safe; otherwise you will find only regret."

Abu Huraira reported that Ibn Abbas, RA, said: "A person will not feel greater fury or anger for any part of his body on the Day of Judgement more than what he will feel for his tongue, unless he only used it for saying or enjoining good."

Al-Hassan, RA, said: "Whoever does not hold his tongue cannot understand his Deen, i.e, knowledge of Islam."

The least harmful of a tongue's faults is talking about whatever does not concern it. The following hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) is enough to indicate the harm of this fault: " [Part of someone's being a good Muslim is his abandoning what does not concern him.](#)" (Related by Tirmidhi)

Abu Ubaida, RA, related that al-Hassan, RA, said: "One of the signs of Allah's abandoning a servant is His making him preoccupied with what does not concern him."

Sahl, RA, said, "Whoever talks about what does not concern him is deprived of truthfulness."

Ibn `Umar (May Allah be pleased with them) reported: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, " [Do not indulge in excessive talk except when remembering Allah. Excessive talking without the Remembrance of Allah hardens the heart; and those who are the farthest from Allah are those whose hearts are hard.](#)" [Tirmidhi]

As we have already mentioned above, this is the least harmful of the tongue's faults. There are far worse things, like backbiting, gossiping, obscene and misleading talk, two-faced and hypocritical talk, showing off, quarrelling, bickering, unlawful-singing, lying, mockery, derision, slander and falsehood; and there are many more faults which can affect a servant's tongue, ruining his heart and causing him to lose both his happiness and pleasure in this life, and his success and profit in the next life. Allah is the One to Whom we turn for assistance.

Abu Bakrah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, " [Shall I not inform you of one of the gravest of the cardinal sins?](#)" We said: ' Yes, O Messenger of Allah!' He (PBUH) said, "[To join others as partners with Allah in worship and to be undutiful to one's parents.](#)" The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) sat up from his reclining position (in order to stress the importance of what he was going to say) and added, "[I warn you making a false statement and giving a false testimony. I warn you against making a false statement and giving a false testimony.](#)" The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) kept on repeating this (warning) till we wished he should stop." [Bukhari and Muslim]

The contents of this Hadith make the gravity of making a false statement abundantly clear. How unfortunate indeed it is that, like other major sins, the evil of giving false testimony is very common among the present-day Muslims. May Allah prevent us from it.

Abu Dharr (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) saying, "[When any Muslim accuses another Muslim of sin \(calling him *Faasiq*\) or of disbelief \(calling him *Kaafir*\), the reproach rebounds upon the one who utters it, if the other person is not deserving of it.](#)" [Bukhari]

What this Hadith stresses is that one should never say about a Muslim that he is sinful (*Faasiq*) or disbeliever (*Kaafir*) when he is not so. The reason is that in that case, one who says it, will be held the *Faasiq* or *Kaafir*. One should, therefore, strictly refrain from uttering such statements. If however the actions of a Muslim deem him/her to qualify for such things, the best approach is to advise him wisely and privately.

Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-As (May Allah be pleased with them) reported: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "A (true) Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe; and a *Muhajir* (Emigrant) is he who leaves the deeds which Allah has prohibited."

[Bukhari and Muslim]

Anas bin Malik (May Allah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Do not harbour grudge against one another, nor jealousy, nor enmity; and do not show your backs to one another; and become as fellow brothers and slaves of Allah. It is not lawful for a Muslim to avoid speaking with his brother beyond three days" [Bukhari and Muslim]

"Do not harbour grudge against one another" means that one should not say or do any thing which is likely to create ill-will and hatred in others. "Nor jealousy" signifies that if a Muslim is granted any blessing by Allah, another should not wish that he be deprived of it. "Do not show your backs to one another" means that if you come across one another, exchange salutations rather than avoid each other. Since all such things create conflict and dissension, these are strictly forbidden in Islam. Muslims are required to resume their conversation and contacts after a maximum period of three days. Any breach beyond this period is prohibited.

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Do you know what is backbiting?" The Companions said: 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' Thereupon he (PBUH) said, "Backbiting is talking about your (Muslim) brother in a manner which he dislikes." It was said to him: 'What if my (Muslim) brother is as I say.' He (PBUH) said, "If he is actually as you say, then that is backbiting; but if that is not in him, then that is slandering (a bigger sin)." [Muslim]

This Hadith elaborates the meaning of backbiting and calumny and points out the difference between the two along with the evils of each one of them. Both these evils are mischief of the tongue and entail great troubles. May Allah save us from both.

Anas (May Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "During the Mi'raj (the Night of Ascension), I saw a group of people who were scratching their chests and faces with their copper nails. I asked, 'Who are these people, O Jibril?' Jibril replied: 'These are the people who ate flesh of others (by backbiting) and trampled people's honour.'" [Abu Dawud]

"These are the people who ate flesh of others" is a metaphor for backbiting. "To trample people's honour" is akin to harming their goodwill and honour. The punishment for these things mentioned in Hadith makes their seriousness obvious.

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Two matters are signs of disbelief on the part of those who indulge in them: Defaming and speaking evil of a person's lineage, and wailing over the dead." [Muslim]

Both the sins mentioned in this Hadith are such that if a Muslim thinks them lawful and still commits them he will become a *Kaafir*, a disbeliever. To defame someone's lineage means to disgrace or humiliate somebody by saying to him or to her with mal-intention: "Your father belongs to such and such profession" or "Your mother is such and such / so-and-so" or "You are a weaver, blacksmith, launderer, cobbler, etc." Mourning and wailing means expressing qualities of a

deceased person through weeping, crying and lamenting loudly. Imam An-Nawawi said that such qualities are attributes and acts of the disbelievers and practices of the pre-Islamic period of ignorance, *Jahiliyyah*.

Abu Dharr (May Allah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (PBUH) observed: "There are three (types of) people to whom Allah will neither speak on the Day of Resurrection nor look at them nor purify them, and they will have a painful chastisement." The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) repeated it three times. Abu Dharr (May Allah be pleased with him) remarked: "They are ruined. Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?" Upon this, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "One who lets down his lower garments (below his ankles) out of arrogance, one who boasts of his favours done to another; and who sells his goods by taking a false oath" [Muslim]

The Hadith makes it evident that it is forbidden for a man to let his lower-body garment go beyond his ankles out of arrogance. The Hadith also makes it clear that it is forbidden to take a false oath with a view to sell one's goods. Messenger of Allah (PBUH) also said in a Hadith reported by Al-Bukhari: "Taking a false oath helps one sell one's goods well but takes away Allah's blessings from it" Just as bad is recounting favours done for others whether done in boast or else.

Abu Huraira, RA, reported Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: " 'Who will take these words from me and act upon them, or teach those who will act upon them?' I (Abu Huraira) said: ' I (will) O Messenger of Allah.' So he (PBUH) took hold of my hand and counted out five, saying, 'Keep away from the forbidden things - you will be the most devout of the people; be pleased with what Allah has given you - you will be the richest of people; treat your neighbour well - you will be a believer; love for the people (the good) which you love for yourself - you will be a Muslim; and do not laugh greatly for too much laughter kills off the heart.'"(Related by Tirmidhi and Ahmed)

***** Unrestrained Glances *****

The unrestrained glance results in the one who looks becoming attracted to what he sees, and in the imprinting of an image of what he sees in his heart. This can result in several kinds of corruption in the heart of the servant. The following are a number of them:

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (PBUH) said: " The *Zina*, i.e, prohibited sexual act, of the eye is the (lustful) look, the *Zina* of the ears is the listening (to voluptuous songs or talk), the *Zina* of the tongue is (the licentious) speech, the *Zina* of the hand is the (lustful) grip, the *Zina* of the feet is walking to places where he intends to commit *Zina*, the heart yearns and desires and the private parts approve all that or disapprove it." [Related by Bukhari and Muslim]

Unrestrained glances of the eye such as looking at women or men lustfully, watching TV or VCR of naked bodies and pornography, etc, causes the individual to darken his heart and fall into prohibited territory. Note, looking at women lustfully or watching naked bodies and pornography is classified as *Haram*. Thus, one avoids the use of TV, VCR, or his glances towards women for lust and such. All together, habits of watching TV, listening to music, and involving in mixed crowds (of men and women) must be curbed so as not to prevent the individual from obedience of Allah's commands, performance of *Salaat*, and leading a life of

a *Mu'min*, i.e, a true believer of Allah. Such things contribute to the decrease of *Iman*, i.e, his level of Faith. If however, he cannot control himself, then he is advised to shut down the TV, VCR, music, and his involvement with mixed crowds, and maximize his time with worthwhile activities that increase his *Iman* such as going to *Masjid*, spending more time with lawful spouse such as his wife or her husband, reading Qur'an, making *Dhikr*, and so on. The uncontrolled *nafs* is described as an instrument of *Shaytan*, and its lustful desires can become a detriment for the individual's well-being, and must be fought against it.

It has been related that the Prophet (PBUH) once said words to the effect: " **The glance is a poisoned arrow of *Shaytan*, i.e, Satan. Whoever lowers his gaze for Allah, He will bestow upon him a refreshing sweetness which he will find in his heart on the day that he meets Him.**" (Related by Ahmed)

Shaytan enters with the glance, for he travels with it, faster than the wind blowing through an empty place. He makes what is seen appear more beautiful than it really is, and transforms it into an idol for the heart to worship. Then he promises it false rewards, lights the fire of desires within it, and fuels it with the wood of forbidden actions, which the servant would not have committed had it not been for this distorted image.

This distracts the heart and makes it forget its more important concerns. It stands between it and them; and so the heart loses its straight path and falls into the pit of desire and ignorance. Allah, Mighty and Glorious is He, says:

" **And do not obey anyone whose heart We have made forgetful in remembering Us- who follows his own desires, and whose affair has exceeded all bounds.**" (Quran Kahf 18:28)

The unrestrained gaze causes all three afflictions.

It has been said that between the eye and the heart is an immediate connection; if the eyes are corrupted, then the heart follows. It becomes like a rubbish heap where all the dirt and filth and rottenness collect, and so there is no room for love for Allah, relating all matters to Him, awareness of being in His presence, and feeling joy at His proximity-only the opposite of these things can inhabit such a heart.

Staring and gazing without restraint is disobedience to Allah:

"**Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that is more purifying for them. Surely Allah is aware of what they do.**" (Quran Nur 24:30)

Furthermore, letting the gaze roam free cloaks the heart with darkness, just as lowering the gaze for Allah clothes it in light. When the heart is light, countless good comes to it from all directions. If it is dark, then clouds of evil and afflictions come from all directions to cover it up.

Letting the gaze run loose also makes the heart blind to distinguishing between truth and falsehood, between the Sunnah and innovation, between right and wrong; while lowering it for Allah, the Might and Exalted, gives it a penetrating, true and distinguishing insight.

A righteous man once said: "Whoever enriches his outward behaviour by following the Sunnah, and makes his inward soul wealthy through contemplation,

and averts his gaze away from looking at what is forbidden, and avoids anything of a doubtful nature, and feeds solely on what is Halal - his inner sight will never falter."

***** **Too Much Food or Over-eating** *****

The consumption of moderate amounts of food guarantees tenderness of the heart, strength of the intellect, humility of the self, weakness of desires, and gentleness of temperament. Immoderate eating brings about the opposite of these praiseworthy qualities.

Al-Miqdam ibn Ma'd Yakrib, RA, said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) say: " The son of Adam fills no vessel more displeasing to Allah than his stomach. A few morsels should be enough for him to preserve his strength. If he must fill it, then he should allow a third for his food, a third for his drink and leave a third empty for easy breathing." (Tirmidhi)

Excessive eating induces many kinds of harm. It makes the body incline towards disobedience to Allah and makes worship and obedience seem laborious-such evils are bad enough in themselves, let alone increasing one's risk of running into all kinds of eating disorders, obesity, and so on. A full stomach and excessive eating have caused many a wrong action and inhibited much worship. Whoever safeguards against the evils of overfilling his stomach has prevented great evil. It is easier for Shaytan to control a person who has filled his stomach with food and drink, which is why it has often been said: "Restrict the pathways of Shaytan by fasting." (Ihya Ulum Diin of Al-Ghazali)

It has been reported that when a group of young men from the Tribe of Israel were worshipping, and it was time for them to break their fast, a man stood up and said: " Do not eat too much, otherwise you will drink too much, and then you will end up sleeping too much, and then you will lose too much."

The Prophet (PBUH) and his companions, may Allah be pleased with them, used to go hungry quite frequently. Although this was often due to a shortage of food, Allah decreed the best and most favourable conditions for His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. This is why Ibn Umar, RA, and his father before him-in spite of the abundance of food available to them-modeled their eating habits on those of the Prophet (PBUH). It has been reported that Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, said: "From the time of their arrival in Madina up until his death, the family of Muhammad (PBUH) never ate their fill of bread made from wheat three nights in a row." (Bukhari)

Any one who controls his stomach is bound to be in control of his Deen, and anyone who controls his hunger is in control of good behaviour. Disobedience towards Allah is nearest to a person who is satiated with over-eating, and furthest away from a person who eats moderately.

***** **Keeping Bad Company** *****

Abu Musa Al-ash'aree, RA, reported that Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: " The example of a good companion is like that of the seller of Musk, and the one who blows the blacksmith's bellows. So as for the seller of Musk, either he will grant you some, or you buy some from him, or at least you enjoy a pleasant smell from him. As for the one who blows the blacksmith's bellows, either he will burn your clothes or you will get an offensive smell from him." (Bukhari)

Unnecessary companionship is a chronic disease that causes much harm. How often have the wrong kind of companionship and intermixing deprived people of Allah's generosity, planting discord in their hearts which even the passage of time-even if it were long enough for mountains to be worn away-has been unable to dispel. In keeping such company one can find the roots of loss, both in this life and in the next life.

A servant should benefit from companionship. In order to do so he should divide people into categories, and be careful not to get them mixed up, for once one is mixed with the wrong other, then evil can find its way through to him:

The ***FIRST*** category are those people whose company is like food: it is indispensable, night or day. Once a servant has taken his need from it, he leaves it be until he requires it again, and so on. These are the people with knowledge of Allah with fear of His commands, who are aware of the scheming of His enemies, and of the diseases of the heart and their remedies- who wish well for Allah, His Prophet and His servants. Associating with this type of person is an achievement in itself. These are the people of prayer, of charity, of Masaajid, people of the righteous path of Quran and Sunnah. Out of this group one learns to increase his spiritual knowledge from the Knowledgeable of *Ahlul Ilm*, i.e, Scholars of *Ahlul Sunnah* by benefitting from them either through their granting knowledge to you or buying some from them, or at least if not *Ahlul Ilm*, then be with the *Jamaa'at of Ahlu Sunnah*, i.e, the general brotherhood of people of *Ahlu Sunnah*. How can one lose in either case.

Abu Harayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (PBUH), who said: " Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He) has supernumerary angels who rove about seeking out gatherings in which Allah's name is being invoked: they sit with them and fold their wings round each other, filling that which is between them and between the lowest heaven. When [the people in the gathering] depart, [the angels] ascend and rise up to heaven. He (the Prophet p.b.u.h.) said: Then Allah (Mighty and Sublime be He) asks them - [though] He is most knowing about them: From where have you come? And they say: We have come from some servants of Yours on Earth: they were glorifying You with '*Subhana llah*', exalting you '*Allahu akbar*', witnessing that there is no god but You '*La ilaha illa Allah*', praising You '*Al-Hamdu lillah*', and asking [favours] of You. He says: And what do they ask of Me? They say: They ask of You Your Paradise. He says: And have they seen My Paradise? They say: No, O Lord. He says: And how would it be were they to have seen My Paradise! They say: And they ask protection of You. He says: From what do they ask protection of Me? They say: From Your Hell-fire, O Lord. He says: And have they seen My Hell-fire? They say: No. He says: And how would it be were they to have seen My Hell-fire: They say: And they ask for Your forgiveness. He (the Prophet p.b.u.h) said: Then He says: I have forgiven them and I have bestowed upon them what they have asked for, and I have granted them sanctuary from that from which they asked protection. He (the Prophet p.b.u.h) said: They say: O Lord, among them is so-and-so, a much sinning servant, who was merely passing by and sat down with them. He (the Prophet p.b.u.h) said: And He (Mighty and Sublime be He) says: And to him [too] I have given forgiveness: he who sits with such people shall not suffer." (Related by Muslim also by al-Bukhari, at-Tirmidhi, and an-Nasaa'i)

The ***SECOND*** category are those people whose company is like a medicine. They are only required when a disease sets in. When you are healthy, you have no need of them. However, mixing with them may be necessary for your livelihood, businesses, consultation and the like. Once what you need from them has been fulfilled, mixing with them should be avoided. These are the folk who

neither have knowledge of Allah, nor worship him, but at the same time do not lead you to vices. Though like any medicine too much dosage of it can cause harm, thus too much time with such a group can cause harm.

The ***THIRD*** category are those people whose company is harmful. Mixing with this type of person is like a disease, in all its variety and degrees and strengths and weaknesses. Associating with one or some of them is like an incurable chronic disease. You will never profit either in this life or in the next life if you have them for company, and you will surely lose either one or both of your Deen and your livelihood because of them. If their companionship has taken hold of you and is established, then it becomes a fatal, terrifying sickness.

Amongst such people are those who neither speak any good that might benefit you, nor listen closely to you so that they might benefit from you. They do not know their souls, of what is beneficial for it nor what is detrimental to it, and consequently put their-selves regularly in the wrongful places, let alone remembrance of Allah's worship and good deeds. They are, due to their indifference, prone to fall into vices. They are so taken by their selfish desires, *Nafsul Amaarah*, that if they speak, their words fall on their listeners' hearts like the lashes of a cane. The worst of this kind are those who erroneously think of themselves full of self-admiration and take delight in their baseless words. Which fool would be ignorant enough to hang around such hollowness?

Ash-Shafi', may Allah be pleased with him, is reported to have said, "Whenever a tedious person sits next to me, the side on which he is sitting feels lowered down than the other side of me."

The ***FOURTH*** category are those people whose company is doom itself. It is like taking poison: its victim either finds an antidote or perishes. They are the people of religious innovation and misguidance, those who purposefully abandoned the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) or advocate other beliefs, or just as deadly, those who call you to disobedience of Allah's commands. A person with any intellect should not sit in their assemblies nor mix with them. The result of doing so will either be the death of his heart or, at the very best, its falling seriously ill.

All in all, mixing with anyone who is bad for the soul should not last, better yet must be avoided. It can be one of the most distressing aspects of a servant's life that he is plagued by such person. If it is necessary to associate out of no choice out of livelihood or business, the servant is advised to take cautious care, until Allah offers him a way out of his affliction and the means of escape from this situation. The exception here is if one wants to help such lost souls for the sake of Allah, and this is a duty ordained by Allah and His Messenger. Such things as good advise, leading a good example for them, calling righteous Da'wah to them, and Charity that leads to betterment of their condition, are all worthy of the righteous person's mixing with those souls.

~~~~~ What Gives the Heart Life and Sustenance ~~~~~

You should know, dear brothers and sisters in Islam, that acts of obedience are essential to the well being of the servant's heart, just in the same way that food and drink are to that of the body. All wrong actions are the same as poisonous foods, and they inevitably harm the heart, and cause it to darken that it is very hard for it to follow routine worship and kindness to others.

In a hadith related by Tirmidhi and Nasa'i from Abu Huraira, RA, reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said: " Verily, when the servant commits a wrong, a black spot is put in his heart. So, if he refrains from it, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart is polished clean. But if he returns to the sin, the spot will increase until it overcomes his (entire) heart, and this is the '*Ran*' that Allah mentioned when He (Glorious and Sublime is He) says: " Nay, but on their hearts is the *Ran* (covering) which they used to earn." (Quran Mutaffifin 83:14)

Ibn Kathir, Rahimahu Allah, in Tafsir of above verse commented, 'this dark covering is known as *Rayn*, it overcomes the hearts of the disbelievers. The covering of *Ghayn*, in contrast, is for the righteous which belongs to those who are near to Allah.' Righteous acts all contribute to the *Ghayn* as cleansing agents for the heart, all washing away those black dots.

The servant should feel the need to worship his Lord, Mighty and Glorious is He, for he is naturally in constant need of His help and assistance. *Iman* consists of three major things: action of the tongue (which are statements we make), actions of the limbs (the eyes, legs, hands, ears, private parts, and so on), and of those we put in our heart (such as shyness, good manners, and so on). Either all three things increase our *Iman* or decrease our *Iman*. Righteous statements such as enjoining good and forbidding evil, words of remembrance of Allah, reading Qur'an, a good advise, a good word, increase our *Iman*. Righteous actions of the limbs such as Wudhu, Salaat, Charity, walking to Masjid all increase our *Iman*. Righteous thoughts, intentions, beliefs in our hearts such as fasting, shyness, good manners, also are of great importance to the well-being of the heart. One can be seen or observed from the level of *Iman* he/she has by just looking at the type of actions he/she does with his tongue, limbs, and heart.

In order to maintain the well being of his body, the servant carefully controls the functions of his tongue and the functions of his eyes, i.e, he controls his gaze. He follows a purifying diet by habitually eating good food at regular intervals, and is quick to free his stomach of harmful elements if he happens to eat bad food by mistake. And he wisely maximizes his time spent with good company.

The well being of the servant's heart, however, is far more important than that of his body, for while the well being of his body enables him to lead a life that is free from illnesses in this world, that of the heart ensures him both a fortunate life in this world and eternal bliss in the next.

In the same way, while the death of the body cuts the servant off from this world, the death of the heart results in everlasting anguish. A righteous man once said, "How odd, that some people mourn for the one whose body has died, but never mourn for the one whose heart has died-and yet the death of the heart is far more serious!"

Thus acts of obedience are indispensable to the well being of the heart. It is worthwhile mentioning also seeking Allah's forgiveness routinely, making Du'as (supplications to Allah), invoking Allah's blessings and peace on the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and praying at night.