

بَاب حَلَاوَةِ الْإِيمَانِ

Finding the Sweetness of Imān

The Delights of Obedience and Worship

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

“Chapter: The Sweetness of Imān” —Sahīh Al-Bukhārī¹

All praise is due to Allāh, we praise Him, seek His aid and His forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allāh from the evil of our souls and from the evil of our actions. Whosoever Allah guides, there is none to misguide—and whosoever He misguides, there is none to guide. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh alone. And I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

¹ Based on and adapted from *Sharh Kitāb Al-Imān min Sahīh Al-Bukhārī* of Ash-Shaikh Al-'Allāmah Sālih Al-Fawzān, pp. 56-59.

To proceed: Indeed, the best of speech is the Speech of Allāh, the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and the worst of all affairs are the newly introduced matters into the religion (for which there is no textual proof) for every newly introduced matter is an innovation, every innovation is misguidance and every misguidance leads to the Hellfire.

From the branches of Imān is finding and tasting its sweetness. There are many believers but not all of them have found the the sweetness of Imān—that is because the sweetness of Imān is something additional to the foundation of Imān.

The sweetness of Imān is that you find pleasure and delight in obedience—so if find in yourself delight for Praying, Fasting, giving in charity, caring for your parents, reciting the Qur’ān, striving in the cause of Allah and so on, then that is the sweetness of Imān. However, if a person merely performs the

acts of worship without tasting the delight in them, then he has not achieved the sweetness of Imān.

So, Imān has its sweetness and these delights are its fruits. The signs of its sweetness are that you delight and find pleasure in worship, that you delight in acts of obedience more than anything else in the world. And this was the condition of the pious predecessors—they would find delight in the Night Prayer, in optional fasting, charity, caring for the needy, in performing Hajj and 'Umrah, striving in the cause of Allah (Jihād), and they would put themselves forward in striving and they were patient in the face of hardships. That is because they would find delight in righteous deeds that are pleasing to Allah (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) that could not be equalled by the worldly temptations. So, these are the fruits of Imān and that lead to its perfection.

As for the one who performs acts of obedience in fulfilment of the orders of Allah

and His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) but does not find that sweet delight in them, then he is a believer (mu'min) but he is devoid of this characteristic of having tasted the sweetness of Imān.

It is must that every believer has the love of obedience to Allah and His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) —and whoever hates obedience to Allah and His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) has disbelieved —so whoever hates, for example, the Prayer, Fasting and Jihād is not a believer. So, every believer must have love for obedience to the Lord and Creator, Allah (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى).

However, this discussion revolves around taking delight and pleasure in performing acts of obedience and this is something additional to the foundation of Imān. And that is because worship involves hardship, it tires out a person, it takes time out of his days and nights, it requires expending his wealth and going out of his way to please Allah —so no

one finds delight in these things except for the one who has perfected his Imān and this is the sweetness that a Muslim achieves.

Bukhāri reported:²

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَهَّابِ الثَّقَفِيُّ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا
أَيُّوبُ عَنْ أَبِي قِلَابَةَ عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ
ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ وَجَدَ حَلَاوَةَ الْإِيمَانِ أَنْ يَكُونَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ
أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِمَّا سِوَاهُمَا وَأَنْ يُحِبَّ الْمَرْءَ لَا يُحِبُّهُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ وَأَنْ يَكْرَهُ أَنْ
يَعُودَ فِي الْكُفْرِ كَمَا يَكْرَهُ أَنْ يُقْذَفَ فِي النَّارِ

Anas bin Mālik (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) narrated that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **“There are three characteristics in the person who has tasted the sweetness of Imān:**

- **The one to whom Allah and His Messenger are more beloved than anything else.**

² Bukhāri (no. 16).

- **The one who loves another person for no other reason except for Allah's sake.**
- **The one who hates to return to unbelief just as he would hate to be thrown into the fire."**

So, to achieve this station, you are not to give precedence to the love of anyone or anything above your love of Allah and His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) —not your children, your parents, your homes, your wealth, your love to follow fashion, etc. Instead, you must give priority to what Allah (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) loves over and above what you love. You may love things, and you are allowed to love that which is *halāl* (permissible) and *tayyib* (pure), and you are not blamed for that —however, if there is a conflict between your love of something and that which Allah loves, but you decide to give

preference to the things you love, then that is a proof of your deficiency in loving Allah.³

And on the other hand, if you give preference to that which Allah loves, then that is a proof of perfection in Imān. For this reason, Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) stated:

³ For example, that you approach a woman for immoral relations who is impermissible to you; or that you entice a woman secretly without her family's knowledge; or that you miss your prayers whilst at work because you are expected to meet deadlines; or that you miss the Jumu'ah prayer because you wish to attend the class at university; or that you remove the hijab because it will help get a "better job"; or that you shave your beard to impress your boss. There are many situations that confront a Muslim daily where he has a choice of giving preference to love of obedience to Allah, or love for worldly gain and advancement —his decision one way or the other shows the strength or weakness in his Imān.

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِينُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

“Say to them (O Prophet), ‘If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your kindred, the wealth that you have gathered, the commerce in which you fear a decline, and the dwellings in which you delight are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger, and striving hard in His Cause, then wait until Allah brings about His decision (i.e. his punishment). And Allah guides not the people who are disobedient.” (At-Tawbah: 24)

The saying, “then wait until Allah brings about His decision” is a threat from Allah. To be clear, Allah does not criticise you for loving the eight things He highlighted in the verse, rather He (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) criticises you and threatens you if these things are giving preference

over the love the Allah —or that you delay in striving in His cause (in Jihād)⁴ or that you refuse to migrate to a Muslim country (Hijrah) due to your love of wealth and affluence, even when you are constricted in practicing your Religion⁵ and your offspring are being cultivated to oppose the Religion of Islam

⁴ i.e. when a person living in a Muslim country is called by the legitimate ruler to enrol in the army.

⁵ Allah stated:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ ^ط قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ^ج قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضَ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا ^د
 فَأُولَئِكَ مَاوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ^ط وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

“As for those whom the angels take in death while they are wronging themselves, the angels say to them: **‘In what condition were you?’** They reply: **‘We were weak and oppressed on earth.’** The angels say: **‘Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to migrate therein?’** Such will find their abode in Hell and what an evil destination.” (An-Nisā: 97)

—then this is all proof of deficiency in Imān and therefore you expose yourself to Allah’s threat, “then wait until Allah brings about His decision”, i.e. His torment and affliction.

The Muhājirūn (Migrants) in the time of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) left behind (in Makkah) their wealth, property, families and homeland and they migrated for Allah’s cause, leaving their own land in which they were raised (and they loved immensely), for another land. Allah stated in the above verse: “the commerce in which you fear a decline” —and Companions readily left their commerce for Allah’s sake and they migrated to Madinah, to Allah and His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). This is proof of the perfection of their Imān, as Allah stated:

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا
مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا وَيَنْصُرُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ

“For the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and their properties seeking bounty from Allah and His

approval, and for supporting Allah and His Messenger, there is also a share (of the booty for them). Verily, they are the truthful.” (Al-Hashr: 8)

The Companions fought in the cause of Allah —some were injured, and others were killed. Yes, they loved to live and wanted to live, there is no doubting that —there is not a person except that he loves life (especially when they are able to do good). But life itself was not worth much when compared to the pleasure of Allah.⁶ That was proof of their love of Allah, that they sacrificed their wealth, their

⁶ The Jihād of the Sahābah (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ) was for Allah’s sake behind a legitimate ruler. Today’s insurgent terrorist groups and suicide bombers are murderous Khawārij whose conduct has nothing to with Islam —the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) warned against them in the harshest of terms. In fact, there is not a sect who were condemned by the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) more than his condemnation of the Khawārij.

property and in many cases, their lives —it is proof of their sincere and truthful perfection of their love for Allah. They gave preference to what Allah loved over what they loved. As for behaving opposite to that —that you give preference to what you love over that which is loved by Allah, then that proves deficiency in your Imān.

So, in the hadeeth above, the first person is, **“the one to whom Allah and His Messenger are more beloved than anything else.”** Nothing takes precedence in his life over and above this love.

The second type of person is, **“the one who loves another person for no other reason except for Allah’s sake.”** This is that you love a Muslim for no other reason except due to his Islam and Imān. You do not love him merely because he’s a relative or because he offers you money —but you love him due to his Imān (first and foremost) because he is your brother in Imān.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“The believers are but brothers, so settle the disputes between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy.” (Al-Hujurāt: 10)

So, it is not a love based on worldly gain, or due to kinship and so on, rather it is a love for Allah’s sake.

The believer who has tasted the sweetness of Imān is the one who dislikes every single affair that is disliked by Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى). He hates all that Allah hates and loves all that Allah loves. Allah hates unbelief and polytheism, so the believer hates them too. Allah hates innovated practices in the Religion which He did not command with, and nor did His Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), so the believer hates them too. Allah hates disobedience and sins, so the believer hates them too. Allah hates ill-treatment of parents, relatives

and neighbours, so the believer hates them too.

The third type of person is, **“the one who hates to return to unbelief just as he would hate to be thrown into the fire”** — and there is not a single human-being who would like to be thrown into a fire and burned —but a believer hates to return to unbelief more than he hates to be thrown into a fire. So, due to his Imān, he would rather remain patient with being burned alive than to abandon his faith and return to unbelief. The Prophet Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) was cast into a fire because of his religion and his steadfast adherence to it. This is a sign of the sweetness of Imān in the heart —i.e. that a believer would hate unbelief just as he would hate to be thrown into a fire so when he reaches that level, it is a proof that he has tasted the sweetness of Imān that is more delightful to him than anything else.

There occurs in a narration, **“That he hates to return back to unbelief after Allah has**

saved him from it just as would hate to be thrown into the fire.”⁷

So, trust in Allāh (سُبْحَانَہُ وَتَعَالَى), seek His aid, His rescue and seek refuge with Him alone, and He will give you relief and a way out of your difficulties.

To finish: All praise is due to Allāh, the Lord of all creation. May Allāh extol the Messenger in the highest company of angels and grant him peace —likewise, his family, his Companions and all those who truly follow him until the Day of Resurrection.

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⁷ Bukhāri (21, 6041), Muslim (43, 67).