

The Great Virtue of Lowering the Sight

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah

Taken from 'al-Muntaqâ min Ighâthatul Lufhân fî Masâyid ash-Shaytân' [pp.'s 102-105] of Ibn al-Qayyim, summarised by 'Alî Hasan al-Halabî

Allâh, the Exalted said,

“Say to the believing men that they should lower their sight and guard their private parts; that will make for greater purity for them. Indeed Allâh is well acquainted with all that they do.” [an-Nûr (24):30]

So Allâh made purification and spiritual growth to be the outcome of lowering the sight and guarding the private parts. It is for this reason that lowering one’s sight from (seeing) the prohibited things necessarily leads to three benefits that carry tremendous value and are of great significance.

The First: experiencing the delight and sweetness of faith

This delight and sweetness is far greater and more desirable than which might have been attained from the object that one lowered his sight from for the sake of Allâh. Indeed, **“whosoever leaves something for the sake of Allâh then Allâh, the Mighty and Magnificent, will replace it with something better than it.”**[1]

The soul is a temptress and loves to look at beautiful forms and the eye is the guide of the heart. The heart commissions its guide to go and look to see what is there and when the eye informs it of a beautiful image it shudders out of love and desire for it. Frequently such interrelations tire and wear down both the heart and the eye as is said:

When you sent your eye as a guide
For your heart one day, the object of sight fatigued you
For you saw one over whom you had no power
Neither a portion or in totality, instead you had to be patient.

Therefore when the sight is prevented from looking and investigating the heart finds relief from having to go through the arduous task of (vainly) seeking and desiring.

Whosoever lets his sight roam free will find that he is in a perpetual state of loss and anguish for sight gives birth to love (mahabbah) the starting point of which is the heart being

devoted and dependant upon that which it beholds. This then intensifies to become fervent longing (sabâbah) whereby the heart becomes totally dependant and devoted to the (object of its desire). Then this further intensifies and becomes infatuation (gharâmah) which clings to the heart like the one seeking repayment of a debt clings firmly to the one who has to pay the debt. Then this intensifies and becomes passionate love ('ishk) and this is a love that transgresses all bounds. Then this further intensifies and becomes crazed passion (shaghafa) and this is a love that encompasses every tiny part of the heart. Then this intensifies and becomes worshipful love (tatayyuma). Tatayyum means worship and it is said: tayyama Allâh i.e. he worshipped Allâh.

Hence the heart begins to worship that which is not correct for it to worship and the reason behind all of this was an illegal glance. The heart is now bound in chains whereas before it used to be the master, it is now imprisoned whereas before it was free. It has been oppressed by the eye and it complains to it upon which the eye replies: I am your guide and messenger and it was you who sent me in the first place!

All that has been mentioned applies to the heart that has relinquished the love of Allâh and being sincere to Him for indeed the heart must have an object of love that it devotes itself to. Therefore when the heart does not love Allâh Alone and does not take Him as its God then it must worship something else.

Allâh said concerning Yûsuf as-Siddîq (AS),

“Thus (did We order) so that We might turn away from him all evil and indecent actions for he was one of Our sincere servants.” [Yûsuf (12):24]

It was because the wife of al-'Azîz was a polytheist that (the passionate love) entered her heart despite her being married. It was because Yûsuf (AS) was sincere to Allâh that he was saved from it despite his being a young man, unmarried and a servant.

The Second: the illumination of the heart, clear perception and penetrating insight

Ibn Shujâ` al-Kirmânî said, “**whosoever builds his outward form upon following the Sunnah, his internal form upon perpetual contemplation and awareness of Allâh, he restrains his soul from following desires, he lowers his gaze from the forbidden things and he always eats the lawful things then his perception and insight shall never be wrong.**”

Allâh mentioned the people of Lût and what they were afflicted with and then He went on to say,

“Indeed in this are signs for the Mutawassimîn.” [al-Hijr (15):75]

The Mutwassimîn are those who have clear perception and penetrating insight, those who are secure from looking at the unlawful and performing indecent acts.

Allâh said after mentioning the verse concerning lowering the sight,

“Allâh is the Light of the heavens and the earth.” [an-Nûr (24):35]

The reason behind this is that the reward is of the same type as the action. So whosoever lowers his sight from the unlawful for the sake of Allâh, the Mighty and Magnificent, He will replace it with something better than it of the same type. So just as the servant restrained the light of his eye from falling upon the unlawful, Allâh blesses the light of his sight and heart thereby making him perceive what he would not have seen and understood had he not lowered his sight.

This is a matter that the person can physically sense in himself for the heart is like a mirror and the base desires are like rust upon it. When the mirror is polished and cleaned of the rust then it will reflect the realities (haqâ'iq) as they actually are. However if it remains rusty then it will not reflect properly and therefore its knowledge and speech will arise from conjecture and doubt.

The Third: the heart becoming strong, firm and courageous

Allâh will give it the might of aid for its strength just as He gave it the might of clear proofs for its light. Hence the heart shall combine both of these factors and as a result, Shaytân shall flee from it. It is mentioned in the narration, “whosoever opposes his base desires, the Shaytân shall flee in terror from his shade.”[2]

This is why the one who follows his base desires shall find in himself the ignominy of the soul, its being weak, feeble and contemptible. Indeed Allâh places nobility for the one who obeys Him and disgrace for the one who disobeys Him,

“So do not lose heart nor fall into despair; for you must gain mastery if you are true in faith.” [Äli Imrân (3):139]

“If any do seek for nobility and power then to Allâh belongs all nobility and power.” [Fâtir (35):10]

Meaning that whosoever seeks after disobedience and sin then Allâh, the Might and Magnificent, will humiliate the one who disobeys Him.

Some of the salaf said, **“the people seek nobility and power at the door of the Kings and they will not find it except through the obedience of Allâh.”**

This is because the one who obeys Allâh has taken Allâh as his friend and protector and Allâh will never humiliate the one who takes his Lord as friend and patron. In the Du‘â Qunût their occurs, “the one who You take as a friend is not humiliated and the one who You take as an enemy is not ennobled.”[3]

for more books and articles:

[scribd.com/UponSunnah](https://www.scribd.com/UponSunnah)

Notes:

[1] Reported by Ahmad [5/363], al-Marwazî in ‘Zawâ'id az-Zuhd' [no. 412], an-Nasâ'î in ‘al-Kubrâ' as mentioned in ‘Tuhfah al-Ashrâf' [11/199] from one of the Companions that the Messenger of Allâh ﷺ said, “indeed you will not leave anything for the sake of Allâh except that Allâh will replace it with something better than it.” The isnâd is sahîh.

[2] This is not established as a hadîth of the Prophet ﷺ.

[3] Reported by Abû Dâwûd [Eng. Trans. 1/374 no. 1420], an-Nasâ'î [3/248], at-Tirmidhî [no. 464], ibn Mâjah [no. 1178], ad-Dârimî [1/311], Ahmad [1/199], ibn Khuzaymah [2/151] from al-Hasan from Alî (RA).

The hadîth is sahîh. The isnâd has been criticised by many, however none of the criticisms hold. Refer to: ‘Nasb ar-Râyah' [2/125] and ‘Talkhîs al-Habîr' [1/247]