

FRIDAY SERMON

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These days, we are speaking about the main concerns that a Muslim who wishes to obey Allah and His Prophet should have. We are speaking about how each one among us should do our best to purify our thoughts and actions and be completely devoted to Allah as Allah says in the Holy Quran “إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاغْبُذْ اللَّهَ مَخْلَصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ”, which we translate as “Surely it is We Who have revealed the Book to thee with truth; so worship Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience.”

Now, all of us adults know quite well that very often, we succumb to the temptation to saying something that should not have been said or to seeing something that which should not be seen or to hearing what should not have been heard. Once we understand that we should always resist such tendencies, we will embark on a path of self-purification which, at times, can be very long but in the end we will, insha Allah, reach a stage where Allah will put our soul at peace and, almost naturally, we will desist from doing anything that might displease Allah. But, before arriving at such a stage and remaining in it, we will wage a constant and almost never-ending struggle with our soul. But the Promise of Allah is true. Eventually, He will Guide us to His ways as He says in the Holy Quran

وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا فِتْنًا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And as for those who strive in Our path — We will surely guide them in Our ways. And verily Allah is with those who do good.” (29:70).

The history of Islam is replete with many examples of such people who have struggled with their soul and who have won. These people perfectly understood the diseases of their soul and how they needed to be cured. One such person was Imam Sulami. So, we continue with reading what he wrote in his book “*Uyoub un nafs wa adawiyaateha*” which has been translated as “The diseases of the soul and its remedies”. We continue where we left off last time. He says:

“And among its maladies are heedlessness and tarrying and persistence [in sin] and procrastination and extending hopes (*taṭwīl al-‘amal*) [to farfetched objectives] and [envisaging] ones final moment as far in [the future]. And the remedy is what I heard al-Ḥusayn Ibn Yaḥyá say he heard Ja’far al-Khuldī say, “Junayd was asked, ‘What of the path of detachment from all but God most high?’ So he said, ‘By turning in repentance that brings an end to persistence [in sin], and fear that eliminates procrastination, and hope that shortens hopes (*amal*) [to the scope] of the course of action, and *dhikr* of God Most High at each and every moment and holding the *nafs* in disdain for its proximity [in reality] to its final moment

and its distance from its [farfetched] hopes.’ It was said to him, ‘By what does the servant arrive at this?’ He said, ‘By a solitary heart in which there is pure Divine unicity.’

If someone reflects on this paragraph, he or she can easily understand how he or she indulges in these diseases of his or her soul. Once one has recognized the disease, one should attempt to apply the remedies proposed and see how effective they are. Unless one tries these remedies, one will not fully realize what is being said. May Allah help us all in this important task. Ameen.

He continues: “And among its maladies is self-regard and taking pity on itself. And the remedy is regarding the grace of God Most High upon him in all moments and states, so that self-regard falls away from him. I heard Abū Bakr al-Rāzī saying I heard al-Wāṣitī, may God have mercy on him, saying, “The nearest thing to God’s disdain is the self-regard of the *nafs* and its own actions.”

[16] And among its maladies is preoccupation with enhancing [outward] appearances, making a display of humility without [inward] humility, and carrying out acts of worship without presence. And the remedy is preoccupation with the protection of inner secrets so that his inner lights enhance his [outer] appearance and he is made beautiful without ostentatious beauty, without seeking honor, without tribal affiliation. On that [subject], the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “For whomever rectifies his secret-heart, God will rectify what he makes public.”

[17] And among its maladies is seeking recompense for good deeds. And the remedy is perceiving his shortcoming in his works and his lack of sincerity therein. Indeed, one who is sagacious, is averse to seeking recompense for his good deeds out of propriety, and he is wary of it with grace, knowing that God جل جلاله has ordained for him a portion, and that which was ordained for him will come in this world and the next, and the only thing that is incumbent upon him, without a doubt, is sincerity.

[18] And among its maladies is the loss of the sweetness of obedience and that is from the illness of the heart and treachery of the *nafs*. And the remedy is eating permissible food, continual *dhikr*, serving the pious ones and drawing near to them and humbly seeking that from God so that God Most High may bless him and render his heart whole through removing the darkness of illnesses, thereby finding the sweetness of obedience.

[19] And among its maladies is lassitude and that is the legacy of satiety. For the *nafs* grows stronger when it is satiated, and when it grows stronger it takes its share, and if it takes its share it overcomes the heart in attaining it. And the remedy is fasting (*tawjīl*). For when it is hungry, that will deprive it of its share, and when its share is diminished, it becomes weak. And when it becomes weak, the heart will overcome it and if the heart overcomes it, [the heart] will impose obedience upon it and cause lassitude to fall away from it. In this way, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “The worst vessel that [any] child of Adam fills is his stomach. Food that suffices the children of Adam is what maintains them. And should it be necessary, a third for food, a third for drink, and a third for breath.”

[20] Among its maladies is seeking authority through knowledge, pride and haughty behavior [because of one's knowledge], and boasting about it, elevating oneself over one's peers. And the remedy is seeing the favor that God Most High bestowed upon him making him a vessel of His decrees (*aḥkām*). And perceiving the deficiency of his gratitude for God Most High bestowing knowledge and wisdom upon him, holding steadfast to humility and contrition, compassion for [God's] created beings and providing them with counsel. For indeed it was related that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whosoever seeks knowledge to vie with scholars or make a show before the foolhardy or to direct people's faces towards him, let him prepare a seat in the fire for himself." For this reason, some of the pious predecessors (may God be pleased with them) said "Whosoever increases in knowledge, let them increase their fear [of God]." So God Mighty and Majestic says, *Only His knowledgeable servants truly fear God* [Fāṭir 35: 28] and a man said to Sha'bī, "Oh man of knowledge (*‘ālim*)!" He replied, "The man of knowledge is he who fears God."

[21] And among its maladies is abundance of speech, and that is born of two things: for the sake of seeking authority [over people] by which one wants people to see one's knowledge and eloquence, or for lack of knowledge of what brings one to speak. And the remedy is the realization that he will be accountable for what he spoke about and that it is written against him [in his book of deeds] and he is responsible for it because God Most High says, *And yet truly over you there are guardians [angels], noble, writing* [al-Infiṭār 82: 10-11]. And God Most High says, *No word does he utter without a ready watcher beside him* [Qāf 50: 18]. And the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whosoever believes in God and the Last Day, let him speak well [of people] or let him be silent." And the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said "Tribulations are directly derived from speech." And the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Are not people thrown prostrate in the fire on their faces except for what they reaped of their tongues?" And the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "The progeny of Adam are accountable for all of their speech except enjoining the good (*ma'rūf*) and forbidding the reprehensible (*munkar*) and *dhikr* of God." And this is taken from the words of God, Mighty and Majestic, *There is no good in most of their secret converse, save for him who enjoins charity or kindness or reconciliation among men* [al-Nisā' 4: 114].

[22] And among its maladies is that when it is satisfied, it praises the one [who] satisfies [it] beyond the limit, but when it is angry it condemns [the one who angered it] beyond the limit. And the remedy is training the *nafs* to honesty and truth until it is no longer accustomed to praising one who is pleased with one and there is no disparagement of whosoever is discontented with one, for indeed most of that springs from little regard of prescriptions and proscriptions. God Most High said, *And pursue not that whereof you have no knowledge. Truly hearing, and sight, and the heart—all of these will be called to account* [Isrā' 17: 36]. And the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Scatter dust in the face of flatterers."

We will stop here for today. These are words of wisdom that we are trying to share with you. I hope we all will profit by them incha Allah.