



Blindness in the Eyes of the Heart Prevents Seeing Light

Think What Will Build Your Character

Allah revealed in the Holy Qur'an,

And whomsoever is spiritually blind here, will be blind in the final world and further astray from the path. And they who have strayed try to tempt you away from the truth which We have revealed to you, or make you invent something else about Us. If you did this, they would have taken you as a friend. And if We had not made you completely firm in your faith, you might have inclined to them a little.

It goes on in Surah al-Isra (17:71). You should read and reflect on this in light of our recent talks. Also Allah says in Surah al-Hajj,

Have they not traveled in the land? Do they not have hearts through which they understand or ears through which they hear? For surely eyes do not become blind; but truly it is hearts in the breast that grow blind.

Asalaamu aleikum. Allah Swt gave us in these 'āyāt a hint of something we all know very well in our day to day life, but that I don't think we spend much time thinking about. In fact, I think a point could be made that we don't think much about the things we know well in our lives, because we think we know them well, so why think about them? There are not just two eyes in our heads that Allah has given us, but there are eyes in our hearts, in our *latā'if*. It's not the blindness of one's eyes in one's head, but the blindness of one's eyes in one's heart that will prevent us from seeing the truth in this world, or from perceiving the Light in the Hereafter.

I know some of you don't have much time to listen to the talks, and are probably bored to death. Or over the years, you thought that when you did have time, you listened; and you're sure I am not talking about anything different. So I don't need to listen anymore. I remind you that anything I am trying to present to you is not coming from me. So any prejudices you have toward me, don't pay any attention to them. If you have any inclination, I really suggest that you listen to some of the things we have been talking about recently. We can all bear to remember to remember. You don't have to put a label on it, or take a label off of it.

The only cause of the heart becoming blind, ultimately, is that we don't heed the lessons and the guidelines. So if we don't hear or respect the guidelines, what the heck do we care about the lessons? But the truth is that Allah has provided for us in many signs in our body's structure, in our minds and in our heart, ways to understand that make life meaningful—not just to confuse ourselves with our own opinions, worries, desires, prejudices, and preferences. What makes us forget Allah, and consequently what makes us forget what the truth is, and the depths of compassion, mercy, goodness, and the power of surrender and obedience and love, and fulfilling of our responsibilities and duties in the best way we really can; what makes us forget being tolerant and patient, and turns us toward judgmentalness or excuse-making for why I'm not this or that, or like this or don't like that; what makes us de-humanize other human beings, and take the essence from life; what makes us misunderstood in our role in life, and the completeness of our roles in life as a mother, father, child, husband, wife, or friend; makes us forget our purpose and function in life; what makes us forget Allah's promise to us through all of His revelations and prophets, while we are in this world, is what makes us blind. It makes the eyes of our hearts and ears close, and makes us react, repel, recoil, and judge – all of us.

It stands to reason, for example when we become ill and our attention is on our body, we become not so attached to the material things that are dear to us in that moment. Maybe

not even to the people who are near and dear to us, because our attention is so much on ourself. Things that take our attention to the world, we remember them and then forget about those too, because we are so involved in our own self. How are you going to care a lot about Syria if you are going for cancer treatments? You are not going to be thinking much about the Syrians and what is happening to them. But if we establish in ourselves such a pattern of compassion, love, mercy, tolerance, and understanding, indeed we will effectively project our own cares and concerns about ourselves, which have to be there; and we will generalize them also to others who are in pain and misery and suffering, and we will say, “Then use this also, Allah.” Treat all of them by treating me. You are giving me an opportunity? Give them an opportunity. Believe it or not, this is what happens. And we have seen some indications of that in our own lives and experiences.

The principle cause of forgetting is the ignorance of the truth of Allah Swt, which is that Allah provides for us everything. The Divine Reality, the inability to see through those physical eyes in certain moments the beauty and truth that Allah has created, all of it is provided by Allah Swt and that should be humbling. The inability to see this also distracts us from taking our responsibilities in the world. We pick and choose our responsibilities and duties, some we like and some we don't like. Like children, we don't like to pick up after ourselves. Later on in life, you will really get into making things neat; washing your dishes. Later on, you really like washing the dishes. You get to look out the window while washing dishes, and see nature and the birds, whatever it is.

What keeps us in a state of ignorance is the darkness that sometimes totally and completely covers us: fears, illness, worries, concern for others, loneliness, doubts, uncertainties—not only from the outside, but also from the inside. They invade us like a virus. Well, it's wintertime and viruses are knocking at our doors. When it gets dark and wet and cold, viruses go, “Yay! Yum, yum! I'm going to go eat that person! It's warm in that person, I'm going to go live there for a while! It's cold out here. 98.6 sounds good for me. In fact, I think I can turn the heat up to 101, 102...” The viruses love it.

What does it mean that it invades us? What is the carrier of the virus? Some of the elements of the darkness that we know too well are not just our distractibility for the things that we justify, but our sort of collective attention-deficit disorder...I'm sorry, multi-tasking... our "dysrexlia"... by attributing it to the rises of technology or whatever. The elements of darkness of arrogance and of evil feed on pride, envy, jealousy, miserliness, greed and vengeance, selfishness and ignorance, not fulfilling our duties to one another, and lying, gossiping, feeding our hungry thoughts, feeling we are victims, having low self esteem, and all these other "wonderful" traits. We all recognize them, because a few hundred years ago, with all the great advances of technology, some of our spiritual guides realized we were going into a different kind of spiritual dark age.

We needed to be brought out of that darkness into light with positivity and with practices that embrace the world. As we became more globally aware of the world, we realized that it wasn't just about us. Life isn't just about me; it's also about the Syrians, the Afghans, the Darfurians, and the poor people. Distraction is so powerful; these lies are so strong. Our desire to do things the way we want to, when we want to, is so powerful. To control things, to make sure "everything is the way I want it" is so powerful that the virus grows in that healthy environment. It mutates so fast, taking on personal characteristics. No vaccine! It's not a bacterium. There is no antibiotic for it. It's unique to the day and the time and place and the age, just like the flu virus this year. They try to guess which one it's going to be this year so they can make the vaccine for that one. The one I'm talking about has no vaccine that's a quick shot.

The vaccine is humility, sincerity, *dhikr*, meditation, prayer, love and service to one another, sublimating your own self, being tolerant and patient. It is a lot of ingredients mixed all together. Then you have to remember. I have my vitamins in packages on the shelf, and I find it hard to remember to take them. "The real remedy is being in tune with your body," Dr. Chang says. That's true. "Don't need remedy if you are in tune with your body, if you eat right. Don't need pills. Don't need poking with needles, if you

listen to body.” He’s absolutely right. If you don’t listen to God, you don’t listen to your body, you don’t listen to your inner self, who are you listening to? CNN? Youtube? He’s right. These viruses are so powerful that the greatest of all Allah’s creation – that’s us – is reduced to blindness, darkness, arrogance, and selfishness. If we give just a little time every day to self-reflection, to *fikr*, to *muraqabah*, just a little bit of time, we won’t be so afraid of looking at ourselves. We won’t be so afraid to change ourselves. We won’t be so afraid to understand that you don’t address the problem head on, as I told the kids yesterday.

You address the thing that causes the problem. You don’t just go to battle against your anger, or against your fears, jealousies, aging... you don’t just go to battle against your disinterest. You ask yourself, “What characteristics and qualities will build my character in such a way that it will be natural for me to be compassionate, or patient, or tolerant, or loving, or caring, or giving, not rejecting or pushing away but embracing? What are those things? That’s what you do because those things taste good. They are nice. They feel good. What will make me a better person is a great question, but “what is it in me?” “I’m so afraid of illness, loneliness, doubt, affection, infection,” whatever. I don’t want to get psychological. Just ask the question: What are the characteristics of a person who is not that way? Those are the characteristics I want. That’s what I’ll concentrate on, because those things will come naturally to us if we open the doorway. And then the virus gets cured.

Allah tells us, if we are blind, we become the lowest of the low. He made you the best of the best, and then took you to the lowest of the low, because we don’t even have a purpose when we are infected with the virus. “I’m tired. I’m in bed. I have to have some tea.” Take a remedy, call the Shaykh. The remedy didn’t work, what’s another one? We become self-absorbed. It’s very obvious when we are sick; we are self-absorbed and have a good reason to be. But when we think we are well, and we don’t see that we are self-absorbed, that’s a real problem. “I’m just doing what I have to do to protect myself.”

Really? You think so? Try to keep that virus from mutating. There are symptoms: greed, anger, jealousy, miserliness, rejection, selfishness... you know them all. I don't even want to say them. One of the classic examples is the cockroach. When a human being loses their purpose, they are lower than a cockroach. Cockroaches don't get up in the morning and say, "Gee, what should I do today? It's a beautiful day out. Maybe I'll go and take a stroll, go down to the zoo, see if there is any food lying around." It only has one purpose. It is going to eat; take a little time off, then go home and make more cockroaches. They used to tell us when we lived in New York, if you see ten cockroaches, that means there are 10,000 in the wall. Well, get the cockroaches out. The only thing that will kill them is nuclear radiation—maybe. Can't you see the world? The cockroaches... "We won! We won!"

Allah gave us choice. If we sit quietly and review some of the choices we have made, I'm sure some of us will scare ourselves to death. So Allah gave us repentance, if we repent sincerely. We understand how difficult it is to make certain changes in our lives, if we go into battle with them; but instead, how much easier it is just to try to be a better person every day. Then we are fulfilling the will of Allah. Then we are remembering, being the people we can be, and becoming more and more who we can be. I hope that having said this, we all feel a little better. And I hope that, like Strontium 90 or Uranium 238 or whatever it is, the half-life of this *khutbah* will be a little longer. Unlike the normal half-life of the *khutbah*, I hope it's more like the half-life of Uranium.

Dhikr, fikr, muraqabah, reading the Qur'an, embracing the message, remembering the Names of Allah Swt, the attributes, we will build up our immunity. We have to play many roles in our lives and work and family life: studentship, teaching, so many roles within the community and in the world we live in. But inside ourselves, there should be only one person. We shouldn't be confused about who we are when we get up in the morning. We should ask ourselves, "What should I do today? It's a great day. I am a happy person. I'm going to start off this day well, with my prayer and prayers for others.

I'm going to take the time, and put my head down on the ground, and remember that the lower I can get my head, the better I will feel. I'm going to say to myself, 'I am going to be all that I can be today.' Who is that? It is a person of good quality and good character. I'm going to try not to make the same mistakes I made yesterday and the day before that." It's one thing if I am multi-tasking; it's another thing if I am many personalities doing it.

We shouldn't judge one another, whether in the moment or over a period of time in years. We should let each other change. We should look for the transitions and changes in each other and affirm them. We should really pray for each other. If there is anybody here you don't like, other than me, you should pray for them and not judge them. We should see even the smallest changes in them as being great efforts on their part and recognize them. Among all things, we should be compassionate, merciful, and forgiving, and not condemning. That way, there is no environment that a virus can survive in. It cannot live in that environment, just like Shaytan cannot whisper into the ear where the tongue is moving and remembering Allah. Sometimes, a little shock is good; so make *dhikr* on your heart. We ask you Allah to help us remember that you said, **"Remember Me and I will remember you."** *Amin. Asalaamu aleikum.*