KEY POINTS – LESSON 16

THE DISEASE OF HYPOCRISY OR NIFAQ

How do we deal with dangerous diseases

Whenever, there is a fear of a dangerous disease, governments and the responsible bodies spread as much information about that as possible. People are always concerned about it and thoroughly keep an eye on any symptoms in us or our loved ones. Even if we don’t see the full symptom but signs of it, we become concerned and check with the experts in the field. We also keep reminding our loved ones that such and such disease is out and we have to be very careful about it.

Hypocrisy is one of such serious diseases of hearts that we have to be highly concerned about, understand its signs and symptoms, try to protect ourselves and keep checking if we have any symptoms or signs of this disease or not; if we do, we need to treat it as soon as possible otherwise it would ruin our Dunya as well as the aakhirah.

Consequences of hypocrisy

We will first discuss two main consequences of this disease at this moment and will come back to the third one at the end of today’s lesson:

1. Allah swt says in the Quran:

   إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الْأَذْرَارِ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَلَنْ يُعْفَنَ نَصِيرًا

   Surely the hypocrites will be in the lowest depth of hellfire, and you will not find any helper for them. (Quran 4:145)

   It is those types of munafiqueen whose disease has spread so much that it is beyond cure. In the early stages, this disease can be cured; but if one wishes for it to grow, Allah swt lets it grow till the point that their destiny becomes the deepest pit of the Hell-fire. At that moment no one can be of any help to them. It is the same as any other worldly diseases. If it is treated in early stages, one can completely recover from it. However, if I the final stages, even the best of the doctors and most advanced of the equipment cannot help.

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11 The Arabic word ‘Nifaq’ means hypocrisy and the one who has this trait is called ‘Munafiq’. The plurals of ‘Munafiq’ are ‘munafiqueen’ or ‘munafiqoon’.
2. For the munafiqeen, the prayers of maghfarah or forgiveness are not accepted even if they are made by the Prophet ﷺ who is the most beloved to Allah swt. He is the same prophet ﷺ whose raised his eyes towards the sky thinking in his mind for the change of Qiblah and Allah swt accepted his prayer. He is the same Prophet ﷺ who Allah swt gave the highest status that any creation could have by calling him in such closeness to Him that not even Jibril enjoyed. However, when it came to making the dua for the forgiveness of hypocrites, Allah swt said:

Whether you ask for their forgiveness or not (their sin is unforgivable): if you ask seventy times for their forgiveness Allah will not forgive them: because they have rejected Allah and His apostle; and Allah does not guide those who are perversely rebellious. (Quran 9:80)

So, what a pitiful situation the munafiqeen are in that even the dua of the Prophet ﷺ is not accepted in the favor. What can be a bigger punishment than this?

Symptoms of the disease of nifaaq

We all have to be afraid of these signs and symptoms

Before we go into the discussion on the symptoms, it is very important to note that we should look for these symptoms in our own selves rather labeling other people as munafiqs. Only those persons should not try to check the condition of their heart for these symptoms who can give a 100% guarantee that they cannot be exposed to this disease. If someone says so, this itself is a symptom of this disease as one of our great predecessors, Hasan Al-Basri told us:

من لم يخف النفاق فهو منافق

Whoever does not fear the nifaaq is the munafiq.12

Similar wordings have been narrated from Hassan Al-Basri through other chains too. Another narration from him states:

ما خافه أي: النفاق إلا مؤمن ولا آمنه إلا منافق

No one is afraid of it – i.e. Nifaaq – except a believer and no one feels safe from it except a munafiq.

Imam Al-Bukhari has also mentioned a similar narration from Hassan Al-Basri at the beginning of Kitab ul Imaan:

غف الخبيث ما خافه إلا مؤمن ولا آمنه إلا منافق.
Accordingly, we should do our self-accountability regarding these symptoms of hypocrisy, otherwise, we will fall into a major problem. Also, note that the above saying is talking about one’s own self and not about how concerned we are about trying to find nifaq in others.

Symptoms mentioned in Quran and Sunnah

Signs and symptoms of munafiqoon mention in Quran and ahadith are many. A number of scholars have attempted to compile them and taught them. Scholars have explained up to 70 signs of the hypocrites. This number varies from scholar to scholar depending on how they categorize and group the signs together. For those interested in reading about these signs in detail, they can refer to a very beneficial book by Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim which has been translated in English with the title “Characteristics of the Hypocrites”. However, considering the limited time we have to cover this topic, we will restrict our discussion to six key signs of hypocrites – 4 of these come from a hadith of the Prophet ﷺ and 2 come from the Quran.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"Whoever has the following four (characteristics) will be a pure hypocrite and whoever has one of the following four characteristics will have one characteristic of hypocrisy unless and until he gives it up.

1. Whenever he is entrusted, he betrays.
2. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie.
3. Whenever he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous.
4. Whenever he is in an argument, he behaves in a very imprudent, evil and insulting manner."

Reference: Sahih al-Bukhari 34

Whenever he is trusted, the hypocrite violates

This is the first sign mentioned in the above hadith. Whenever a hypocrite is trusted, it breaks the trust. This trust can come in many forms. This trust can be what our employer entrusts us with when giving a job. If we don’t fulfill our obligation there, it will be considered as a violation of trust. When we marry someone, it is a relationship based on trust. If we are not kind to our spouse, it is a violation of trust. A teacher is entrusted to exert and effort for the growth of the student. Community members are entrusted with responsibilities that they have to fulfill. And most importantly, all the possessions that we have – including our wealth, our possessions, our ears, our
eyes, our tongue, our arms, our legs, our hearts and so on – are all Amanah (trust) of Allah swt with us.

If we are suffering from this condition, we should be mindful of this trust whether we are in a company or we are alone. The one whose Amanah we are using is watching us all the time. There is nothing that would be hidden from him. All of our acts are recorded. We should remember,

- There are angels on our shoulders are recording all our deeds. This record will be presented to us in full.
- The air in which we are doing the actions is recording it too. These actions can be decoded and presented too. Even the science has proven this now (we will discuss more on this in a lecture in week 6 of this course – stay tuned).
- Our body parts which we use in disobeying the commands of Allah swt will give testimony against us. What a shameful day that would be if we don’t repent. Whenever we think of sinning with our hands, our tongue or our eyes, we should be mindful that these very things will speak against us.
- We should think that even at the time when we are disobeying the commands of Allah swt, we do so while enjoying His blessings which He allows us to use even at the time.
- On top of that, He Himself is seeing all this. We break His command while he sees us and knows what is in our hearts.

This thinking and contemplation is extremely important if we wish to overcome this disease.

**Whenever he speaks, the hypocrite lies**

The hypocrites are those who lie so much that it becomes there second nature. They don’t even feel about it. They may appear to be religious, but when it comes to business or selling or when a gain is involved, their inner self takes control and they resort to lying.

People generally lie for the following reasons:

- To avoid an obligation
- To impress someone
- To gain a benefit
- To avoid a consequence
- To come out of a situation
- To hurt someone if our heart is crooked

The cure can this be found through Muhasabah (self-accountability) and Muraqabah (deep contemplation to rid our heart of the evil characteristics). We should think that none of these short-term gains are worthy-enough to risk our aakhirah for them. All of these are temporary; whereas, what is to come is forever.
When he makes a promise, the hypocrite goes against it

It can be in two forms.

- One, a hypocrite makes a statement but does not fulfill it in that manner. He makes a promise to be there at 3 PM and reaches there at 4.30. He promises that he made a sincere and best possible effort for something, but ends up with a half-hearted task.
- Two, the hypocrite completely ignores his promise. He acts and behaves as if he never made that promise or commitment.

As a believer, we can work on developing a habit of not promising something that we intend to do. It only nurtures hate and discontentment in hearts. On the hand, we should develop a habit of fulfilling our promises. This is something for which a number of cures exist. There is a whole science behind the art of making and breaking habits. We can certainly benefit from this knowledge.

Whenever in an argument or discussion, the hypocrite becomes angry

This is one of the key traits of munfiqeen. Whenever, they are in a situation where an argument is raised, the explode and are excessively angry. Their purpose is to make people avoid expressing a difference of agreement with them. Hypocrites at the time of the Prophet especially used to display this characteristic when they were called towards goodness and used to explode out of anger alleging the companions for judging them or not respecting them enough or belittling them. This continues to happen today. May Allah not make us from those who display such attitude towards good advice.

InshaAllah, one of our upcoming lectures will focus on anger and the means to control it. With regards to good advice, we should never get offended by it. Rather we should develop a mindset that there are weaknesses in us which “we want” to be highlighted to us so that we can fix them. Whenever this happens, we should be thankful to the person who helps us achieve our objective. Similarly, we should develop the attitude that all good suggestions and advice are our lost property, we should acquire from wherever we find them. If this attitude develops, we will not be angry at people who give us good advice and feedback.

Hypocrites are slack in their prayers:

Allah swt says:

When they stand up for prayer, they do it half-heartedly (Quran 4:142)

The hypocrites do not find the pleasure and sweetness in salah. They are in the masjid as if a fish is thrown out of the water. If they are in a company of people who are keen for prayers and they have to pray with them too because of being with them, they find it to be a nuisance. This is not the attitude of the believers. For the hypocrites, other things and entertainment take priority over salah.
Whereas for the believers, everything is structured around salah. Salah is a pillar of the religion. Whatever goes inside the house goes around the pillars. Pillars can’t be moved to accommodate things; rather we move or remove things depending on the situation.

We can overcome this factor by trying to develop khushoo in salah. InshaAllah we will cover this in detail in week 5.

**The hypocrites do not spend but with a heavy heart**

Allah swt says about the Munafiqoon that they:

> نَّلَا يَّبْنُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كَبِسَانِيْنَّ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كَارْفَاقِنَّ

They never come to prayer except half-heartedly, and they never donate except resentfully (Quran 9:54)

Whenever the time for giving comes, they hold back. They even make fun of those who give in the way of Allah. They made the fun of Abu Bakr and Umar when they brought all their possessions for Allah’s sake. At the same time, they also made fun of the poor companion who worked hard only to earn a handful of dates which he brought to Allah’s messenger as a donation in the way of Allah. It was a disease in their hearts which caused them to do this. If we find ourselves in a such a situation too, if our hands are getting tied to our backs when the time for giving comes, if we also become starting counting the alternatives where we could spend this money, we are also fulfilling the Sunnah of the hypocrites. May Allah swt prevent us from having their traits.

It is the job of Satan that he makes us fear the poverty. It is because of this that we become hesitant to spend in the way of Allah. On the other hand, when it comes to decorating your worldly house and spending on the things that have nothing to do with the hereafter, we don’t have much worry about the burden on our pockets. It is the work of Satan.

We have to be confident that what our beloved Prophet ﷺ has told is absolutely correct. The charity has told is absolutely correct. The charity will never decrease wealth. Anybody can sincerely spend in the way of Allah and see this for himself.

**Nifaq has levels:**

While reading the signs and symptoms above, many of us would think that we have fallen into hypocrisy. The companions sometimes used to think like that too. But the Prophet ﷺ clarified it for them and us.

Hanzala Usayyidi, who was amongst the scribes of Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ), reported:

I met Abu Bakr. He said: How are you? He (Hanzala) said: Hanzala has turned to be a hypocrite. He (Abu Bakr) said: Glory be to Allah, what are you saying? Thereupon he said: I say that when we are in the company of Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) we ponder over Hell-Fire and Paradise as if we are seeing
them with our very eyes and when we are away from Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) we attend to our wives, our children, our business; most of these things (pertaining to After-life) slip out of our minds. Abu Bakr said: By Allah, I also experience the same. So I and Abu Bakr went to Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) and said to him: Allah’s Messenger, Hanzala has turned to be a hypocrite. [They both become worried and went to the Prophet (ﷺ).] Thereupon Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: What has happened to you? I said: Allah’s Messenger, when we are in your company, we are reminded of Hell-Fire and Paradise as if we are seeing them with our own eyes, but whenever we go away from you and attend to our wives, children, and business, much of these things go out of our minds. Thereupon Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said: By Him in Whose Hand is my life, if your state of mind remains the same as it is in my presence and you are always busy in remembrance (of Allah), the Angels will shake hands with you in your beds and in your paths [i.e. you would start to interact with them all the time] but, Hanzala, time should be devoted (to the worldly affairs) and time (should be devoted to prayer and meditation). He (the Holy Prophet) said this thrice.

The final advice

The final consequence of hypocrisy and excessive love of worldly things that we wish to discuss today is shown by the following ayah:

 فلا تجعلوا أموالاً ولا أولاداً وبين الله وبين رسوله لكم في الحياة الدنيا رازقين  

Let neither their wealth nor their children dazzle you: in reality, Allah intends to punish them with these things in this life and that their souls may depart while they are still unbelievers. (Quran 9:55)

These things for which the hypocrites and the disbelievers spent all their life itself become a punishment for them – in Dunya as well as aakhirah. When the children for whom they turn their hair grey by working day and night, they then realize that all those years have gone to waste. When their heart is void of contentment while their banks are filled with money, they then realized that the contentment of heart is not in what they were busy accumulating throughout their life. Before that time comes and before it gets too late, we have to take heed and turn the direction of our life towards Him whose mention brings peace and tranquillity to the hearts. May Allah make us from the true lovers of Him and His beloved Prophet ﷺ.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 16:
List down the signs of hypocrites from today’s lecture on a piece of paper and take it with you to a quite and peaceful spot. Check your heart. Do you have any of these signs too? Ponder about some of the cures that we have discussed today. May Allah protect us all from this harmful disease.