KEY POINTS – LESSON 23

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OVERCOMING GREED: THE REAL WEALTH IS THE WEALTH OF HEARTS

Imam Junaid and the bag of gold coins

I begin with a story from a long time ago. This is the story about Imam Al-Junaid who was one of the great scholars from our early predecessors. Once he was sitting in the courtyard inside the haram of Mecca along with his disciples. These disciples look very poor from the worldly perspective and were known as the Fuqara which is the plural of ‘Faqeer’ and literally means impoverished, or very poor. A good rich man approached him with a bag which contained six hundred golden coins. He gave that bag to Imam Al-Junaid and requested him to distribute that among his poor companions, the Fuqara. Junaid R.A. graciously accepted that and then pondered for a moment. Then he looked at the rich main and asked: Do you have more of this? He replied: Yes, I do have more of this. The Imam then asked him: Do you desire more of this? He said: Yes, why not. Then the Imam Junaid took that bag and gave it back to him saying: Please accept this from us.

What do we learn from this story? When the man came and gave that money to be distributed among the so-called fuqara or the poor people who looked needy, were actually in need. That is why they were called ‘Fuqara’. But they were in need of Allah. They did not have much worldly things but if anyone asked them if they needed any worldly thing, they did not accept.

Why so? Because, the real wealth is the wealth of hearts.

Who is the richest man

It is said that a wise man was sitting with another wise man. One of them said to the other: Who amongst people is the richest? The other man said: The one who finds what he desires every time. Whenever he needs or desire something, it is available for him; the person who is self-subsistent self-sufficient. This person then asked the questioner: Do you know someone who is richer than that? The first person replied: Indeed, I do. He said that it is the one who does not desire anything and therefore does not need to find what he desires. The real wealth is the wealth of the heart. When the heart is filled with riches, it does not need to look for richness elsewhere.
It is not what we have that counts; but in actuality what does it do to our emotions. If we will feel on account of what we have secured, then security is in the heart; and if security is in the heart and it has other mechanisms by which it could be acquired. Accordingly, it is not necessarily acquired through wealth and power alone.

**Do not be over-attached to the temporary beings – attached with the One who is truly and always Self-Sufficient**

Please keep that in mind what you have shall come to an end and will come to an end. It will eventually extinguish. But what Allah has will never and will never extinguish. This is a reality that I and you need to internalize - not only to know and to memorize but also to internalize and make it a part of our conduct. We should make ourselves have this meaning in front of our thinking all the time - in our emotions, in our inner consciousness, in our hearts.

I should always know that Allah swt says:

سُلَيْسلَ سَلاَ بُكَيْرَةَ وَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ شَيْءٌ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

O Mankind! It is you that are in need [of Allah – i.e. you are the Fuqara]. but Allah is the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise. (Quran 35:15)

If we recognize, and we know, and we ponder at home, at work, while travelling, and when we go and take moments alone to ponder, we should realize and internalize that what we have is temporary and will not exist soon. Allah essentially is self-sufficient - no matter what we do and how much we seek of him. We are in need of Allah swt and Allah is the only self-sufficient. To Allah belong the treasures of heavens and earth. These treasures are not only treasures of material possessions or wealth or of power or of leadership. The treasures of Allah swt also contain the treasures of the hearts such as patience, composure, tranquillity, kindness, benevolence, magnanimity, humility, humbleness, forbearance, forgiveness, kindness, justice, and so on. Allah swt owns the keys of not only wealth and health and power and material possessions, but most importantly the treasures and the favors and the grace of the inner heart and the character.

**How to fill one’s heart with richness**

Allah swt sent our beloved Prophet ﷺ to perfect the character that any human being could ever attain. He swt made our Prophet ﷺ to be a role model for not only Muslims but the whole humanity. He told us in a beautiful hadith al-Qudsi:

بِفَوْضَلِ اللَّهُ ابْنَ亚َدْمَ لِلْخَيْرِ أَمْثَالَ الْجَهَرِ أَنْمَدَدُكَ عَلَى

Allah swt say: O son of Adam! Free yourself for my worship. I will fill your heart with richness [or contentment].

[Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 37, Hadith 4246]
The richness that many of us don’t understand and don’t seek after is the richness inside the heart. That’s all what counts. I could be rich externally but extremely but internally be poor.

If we trust Allah swt, he will suffice us against the poverty – the poverty of hearts. You will never feel poor if you do that and if you don’t do that, and you have the choice, I shall fill up your hearts with worries of this world - social worries, psychological worries, family worries, financial worries and so on. There is no peace inside in such situation. There is a turmoil inside. There is an agitation inside. There is a poverty inside. A person in this state always feels poor – whether he has the worldly possessions or not. Such a person is always afraid to lose. I want my heart to be rich because I could have things but my heart is destitute, or I don’t have and my heart is still destitute. If someone gets things but my heart is destitute, or I don’t have and my heart is still destitute. If someone gets poor if you do that and if you don’t do that, and you have the choice, I shall fill up your hearts with richness, Allah swt will fix for him or her all the worries and concerns and affairs. In other words, inside of you, you will have one direction, you will not be scattered and shattered inside and you.

We all know that when someone has a lot of worries scattered here and there in their chests, how painful it is. Having too many concerns is a very painful experience. If our focus is on Allah swt, then we will not have to worry about these too many directions.

This reality is explained in the hadith below:

Zaid ibn Thabit reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever makes the Hereafter his most important matter, Allah will settle his affairs and make him content in his heart and the world will come to him although he does not want it.”

Source: Sunan Ibn Mājah 4105

Grade: Sahih (authentic) according to Al-Albani

Consequence of making Dunya one’s primary objective

As seen from the above, one who focuses his worries and his concerns and his aims on dunya, the one whose the internal drive and the internal aim is the dunya, it comes with consequences.

- The consequence one is that Allah will make that person always be worried about being poor. There concerns would be on the ‘what if’ this happens or that happens and I get poor. Many of us live like that without realizing that this state of ours could be a result of what the condition of our spiritual hearts is
- The second is that Allah will disperse for him or her their matters. In other words, they will feel scattered, constricted, insecure, afraid, anxious and depressed inside their hearts. They will angry and restless and agitated.

- Thirdly, they will not get anything more the dunya except what Allah has already decreed for him. What we get does not depend on how much effort we put on. Doing a regular effort to earn is Sunnah of our messenger; however, the returns for those efforts are not linked the amount of effort. Some people work hard and attain less and some work less and attain more. What we are going to get has been decreed. If we keep our focus on the Aakhirah while still making an effort to earn as per the sunnah, we will get what is decreed for us. If we shift our focus to the dunya at the cost of aakhirah, we will still receive what is intended for us but our matters will get constricted because of this approach.

What has he found who has lost You, O Allah!

One of the pious predecessors said, “What has he found who has lost You?”. Even if someone gets all the riches of the world but is void of presence of Allah swt in his heart, if he is morally and spiritually empty, he is the poorest man. The real wealth, is the wealth of hearts. One could be physically, academically or intellectually feel fulfilled, but if he or she is spiritually empty, that person is in a great loss. The pious predessor also continued his sentence and said, “What has he lost who found You”. Even if that person has zero bank balance, even if he is cleaning the rubbish, if his clothes are not the best, that person is the richest person.

Strive to internalize this message

It requires effort and energy for you and me to internalize these meanings inside of my emotional, physical and spiritual space memory constantly. We all need to strive for that and make that effort. Unless I am constantly in the state of awareness and have these meanings in front me, whether in the realm or physical or spiritual or intellectual realm, I would be destitute. We should therefore strive to embed them in our memories. That would give us a richness which would be far superior to richness that comes from a bag full of gold coins, worldly assets and possessions.

CONTEMPLATION TASK FOR LESSON 23

Sit at a quiet spot and think: How much value do you give to richness of heart? How much of your time do you spend in attaining the richness of dunya as opposed to the richness of heart? How can you shift your love and alter your compass of life? If you shift focus on the hereafter, you would not get anything less than what is destined for you, however, tranquillity and serenity will enter your heart and your matters will be taken care of by the one in whose love you will fall.