

The Heaven of this World

From al-Wâbil as-Sayyib min al-Kalim at-Tayyib

by Ibn al-Qayyim

Translated by Micheal Abdur-Rahmân Fitzgerald and Moulay Youssef Slitine

I heard the Shaykh of Islâm, Ibn Taymiyyah - may Allâh sanctify his soul - say, '**Truly, there is a Heaven in this world and whoever does not enter it, will not enter the Heaven of the next world.**'

And once he said to me:

What can my enemies do to me?

I have in my breast both my Heaven and my garden.

If I travel they are with me, and they never leave me.

Imprisonment for me is a religious retreat [*khalwa*].

To be slain for me is martyrdom [*shahâda*]

and to be exiled from my land is a spiritual journey [*siyaha*].

During his imprisonment in the fortress, he would say, '**I could not be more grateful for this blessing were I to have this entire fortress in gold**'

and '**I could never repay them for the good that has come to me in [this prison].**' [Ibn al-Qayyim accompanied Ibn Taymiyyah to prison]

And in prostration he would say, whilst in a state of imprisonment '**O Allâh, help me in my gratitude to You, remembrance of You and the most beautiful worship of You**' as much as Allâh willed. [A prayer recommended by the Prophet to Mu'adh. *Nasâ'î, Sahw*, 1286; *Abû Dâwûd, Salât*, 1301]

Once he said to me, '**The real prisoner is someone whose heart is imprisoned from his Lord; the true captive is someone captured by his passions.**'

'And when he entered the fortress and was inside its walls, he gazed upon them and recited the verse, '**And a wall between them is struck which has a gate. On the inside there is a mercy, on the outside punishment.**' [Qur'ân LVII: 13]

Allâh knows, I have never seen anyone who had a better life than his. Despite the difficulties and all that expunges comfort and luxury, nay, things completely opposite to them; despite intimidation and oppression, Ibn Taymiyyah had a purer life than anyone could. He was the most generous, the strongest of heart and the most joyful of soul, with **'the radiance of bliss'** on his face. [**'Nadratur al-na'im'**. Qur'ân LXXXIII:24]

When we were seized with fear and our thoughts about Allâh's decree turned negative, and the earth grew narrow for us, we would go to him. No sooner did we look at him and hear his words than all these feelings would leave us, to be replaced by relief, strength, certainty and tranquility. So glory be to the One who lets His servants witness His Heaven well before they meet Him, who opens its doors to them in this world of deeds and who gives them something of its refreshment, its breeze and its perfume - that they might seek it and hasten towards it with all their strength.

An ascetic once said, **'If kings and the sons of kings knew what we had, they would try to take it from us by the sword!'**

Another said: **'How pitiful, the worldly people! They leave this life without ever having tasted the sweetest thing in it.'** When asked what that was, he replied, **'The love of Allâh, the knowledge of Allâh and the remembrance of Allâh.'**

[This is similar to the saying by 'Abdullâh ibn al-Mubâarak: **'Worldly people leave the world before having feasted on the sweetest thing in it.'** They asked him what that was and he answered, **'The knowledge of Almighty Allâh.'** Isfahânî, *Hilyâ*, VIII:167]

Another said: **'There are times when the heart dances in joy.'** And another said, **'There are times when I say, if the people of Heaven have anything like this, how truly sweet their lives!'**

To love Allâh, to know Him intimately, to remember Him constantly, to find peace and rest in Him, to make Him alone the ultimate object of love, fear, hope and trust; to base one's act on His control of His servant's cares, aspirations and will - such is the world's Heaven, and such is a blessing with which no other blessing can compare. It is by this that the hearts of those who love Allâh are gladdened and that the pious find life. As their hearts are gladdened by Allâh, so others are gladdened by them. For whoever finds his source of gladness in Allâh, gladdens all hearts; whoever does not, finds nothing in this world but restlessness.

Anyone with life in his heart will confirm this. But someone whose heart is dead will only estrange you from Allâh; and so seek intimacy with Allâh without him, when you can, for his mere presence will estrange you. If you are tested by him, show him only your outer aspect, but leave him behind in your heart. Depart from him with your soul and do not let him distract you from the one who is most important to you. Know that the greatest of all losses is the involvement with someone who weakens your relationship and standing with Allâh, cutting you off from Him, wasting your time, dispersing your heart, weakening your resolve and dividing your aspirations. Therefore, if you are tested with this kind of situation - and it is inevitable that you will be - then bear up for the sake of Allâh, and acknowledge Him as much as you are able.

Draw near to Allâh by whatever of it pleases Him. Make your association with worldly people a profit not a loss. Be like the man traveling along, whom another invites to stop: seek to take him along with you. When he comes along, lead him but be not lead by him. And if he refuses, and you have no hope that he will journey, then at least do not let him detain you. Rather, hasten on, pay him no heed. Do not even turn in his direction, for he is a highway robber regardless.

Protect your heart and be careful of how you spend your day and your night. Let not the sun set on you before you reach camp, 'lest you be carried off'. Nor let the dawn find you abandoned in the camp after the caravan has moved on, and the time is nigh for you to reach them.