

E-Book

Lust for Leadership



Sheikh

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| **Lust for Leadership ...**



Introduction

All praise is due to Allaah, Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings be upon His trustworthy Prophet, and all his family and Companions.

To proceed:

One of the things that lead to the corruption of the heart's sincerity and Tawheed (belief in the Oneness of Allaah), increase one's longing for this worldly life, and lead to the abandonment of the Hereafter, is lust for leadership. It is a severe disease in the name of which people squander their money and shed blood.

It leads to enmity and antipathy between brothers, and sometimes even between father and son. This is why the disease has been named 'the hidden desire'.

We will discuss this serious topic in detail, first by explaining the history behind calling it 'the hidden desire'. Then, moving onto the importance of leadership, people's need for it, and the Muslim's attitude towards it. We shall then mention its forms, causes, and cure. We ask Allaah to grant us all beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds.

Naming the lust for leadership 'the hidden desire'.

This name originated from Shaddaad ibn Aws, may Allaah be pleased with him, when he covered himself with his clothing and wept profusely, until somebody asked: "Why are you



weeping O Abu Ya'la?" He said: "The thing I fear most for you is hidden desires and Riyaa' (showing off). You will be tested with calamities because of your leaders, you will be tested with calamities because of your leaders, you will be tested with calamities because of your leaders. The ones (leaders) who are obeyed when they command people with good and are obeyed when they command people with evil. Who is the hypocrite? The hypocrite is like the camel that chokes and dies with its own lariat. His evil does not surpass himself.¹"

Abu Daawood As-Sajistaani, may Allaah have mercy on him, explained hidden desire as lust for leadership. Abu Bakr ibn Daawood, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "I heard my father say: Hidden desire is lust for leadership.²" It seems, (Allaah knows best), that this is a way of explaining hidden desire through one of its examples.

Abu 'Ubayd, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Hidden desire is something about which people have different opinions. Some have explained it as the desire for women and other types of desire. I don't think it can be explained as one specific type of desire. Hidden desire is any sin a person commits privately and insists on committing it in his heart. In fact, hidden desire is the insistence, even if the person does not actually carry it out.³ "

¹ Reported by Ibn Al-Mubaarak in his book Az-Zuhd (16).

² Reported by Ibn Taymiyyah in his book Majmoo' Al-Fataawa (16/346).

³ Reported by Abu 'Ubayd in his book Ghareeb Al-Hadeeth (14/171).



The explanation of Abu Daawood, may Allaah have mercy on him, of hidden desire as the lust for leadership, is the most common explanation among scholars (people of knowledge) and has become a symbol of it, unless there is something that indicates otherwise.

Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Something which proves that people may be ignorant of their own condition and not feel it, is that many people may have a hidden desire for leadership but are insensible to it. The person may be sincere in his worship but not aware of his own faults. Many scholars have discussed this topic, and it has been named the hidden desire.”¹ “

People need a ruler

Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Ruling people’s affairs is a religious obligation. In fact, religion and life cannot be established without it. Humans cannot fulfill their interests without uniting together, as they need each other. In order to unite together they need a leader.” The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: “If three people go out on a journey, then they should make one of them a leader.”²

¹ Reported by Ibn Taymiyyah in his book Majmoo’ Al-Fataawa (16/346).

² Reported by Abu Daawood: (2608). Al-Albaani: Hasan.



'Abdullaah ibn Amr ibn Al-'Aas, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"It is not permissible for three men to be in the wilderness without making one a leader upon them."*¹

So the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, made it obligatory upon them to come together in this small group while travelling, even temporarily.

This is to stress the importance of the necessity of a leader in order to unite together. Also, Allaah made it obligatory to enjoin good and forbid evil, and this cannot be achieved without strength and leadership. It is also indispensable for everything else that Allaah the Almighty has obligated upon us, such as Jihaad (armed struggle in the cause of Allaah), justice, establishing Hajj (pilgrimage), Friday prayer, the A'yaad (plural of 'Eed which are the Muslim festivals), coming to the aid of the oppressed, and establishing the Hudood (prescribed punishments).

None of these can be achieved without strength and leadership. This is why it was narrated: *"The sultan is Allaah's shade on the earth."*² There is also a saying that goes: **Sixty nights under the rule of an oppressive ruler are better than one night without a ruler, and history has proved this.**³ So, it is clear that people need someone to manage their affairs and to take responsibility for them.

¹ Reported by Ahmad: Al-Albaani: Dha'eef.

² Reported by Al-Bayhaqi: (6/15).

³ Reported by Ibn Taymiyyah in his book As-Siyaasa As-Shar'iya (129).



The Muslim's attitude towards leadership:

Abdurrahman ibn Samaarah, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said to him: *"Do not seek to be a ruler, for, if you are given it by your asking, then you will be held responsible for it [i.e. Allaah will not help you], but if you are given the authority of ruling without your asking for it, then Allaah will help you."*¹

Abu Moosa, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: "I came to the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, along with two men (from the tribe) of Ash'ariyeen, one on my right and the other on my left, while the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, was brushing his teeth (with a Siwaak), and both men asked him for some employment. The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *"O Abu Moosa! [or O 'Abdullaah ibn Qays]"* I said: 'By Him Who sent you with the Truth, these two men did not tell me what was in their hearts and I did not feel (realize) that they were seeking employment.'

It was as if I were looking now at his Siwaak being drawn to a corner under his lips, and he said: *"We never [or, we do not] appoint for our affairs anyone who seeks to be employed. But O Abu Moosa! [or 'Abdullaah bin Qays] go to Yemen."*²
Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, narrated that

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaari: (7147) and Muslim: (1652).

² Reported by Muslim: (1824).



the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *"You people will be keen to have the authority of ruling which will be a thing of regret for you on the Day of Resurrection. What an excellent wet nurse it is, yet what a bad weaning one it is!"*¹

Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"What an excellent wet nurse"* refers to the superiority, wealth and decisive word that are obtained through leadership, and the physical and delusive pleasure after attaining leadership. *"A bad weaning one"* refers to being separated from it due to death and the consequences which result from it in the afterlife."²

As-Si'di, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

"Ruling and authority are not things that you should seek, in fact you should ask Allaah to avert them from you, as you do not know if ruling is good or evil for you. Neither do you know if you are able to perform the task (properly). Therefore, if a person seeks it himself he shall hold the responsibility, and whenever a slave takes responsibility by himself, he shall not be guided or aided by Allaah, as seeking leadership is a sign of two matters:

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaari: (7148).

² Reported by Ibn Hajar in his book Fat-h Al-Baari (13/126).



- 1) That the person is highly concerned with this life and leadership. This concern means that the person is not one to delve in Allaah's property nor take on a high status above Allaah's creation.**
- 2) It shows that the person is reliant on himself and does not seek aid from Allaah.**

As for the person who does not seek leadership and authority, but instead leadership comes his way without his requesting it, if he also does not find himself able to perform the task, then Allaah will aid and assist him and he will not hold the responsibility by himself as he did not seek this trial. When a trial befalls a person without their seeking it, Allaah guides and helps the person to carry out the task. In this testing time, the person firmly relies on Allaah and whenever a person carries out his duty whilst putting his trust in Allaah he will succeed.

According to the saying of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam: "*Allaah will help you*", there is proof that leadership and other types of worldly rule include two things: religion and worldly life. The purpose of all types of leadership is the betterment of people's religion and life. Therefore, commanding and forbidding is related to leadership. Also related is obligating duties and deterring people from forbidden matters, in addition to obligating people to fulfill the rights of others. It also includes politics and Jihaad (armed struggle in the cause of Allaah). So it is for those who devote their sincerity to Allaah and perform their obligations of worship.



As for those who do not apply those, then they are a great danger. This is why it is Fardh Kifaayah (communal obligations, the fulfillment of which is not mandatory on every individual Muslim) as many other obligations depend upon it."¹

However, in some special cases, it is permissible to seek leadership, as Allaah Says (what means), informing us of what Yoosuf (Joseph), may Allaah exalt his mention, said: *{[Joseph] said: "Appoint me over the storehouses of the land. Indeed I will be a knowing guardian."}* [QUR'AAN: 12:55].

As-Si'di, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "He sought it for the interest which could not be achieved by anyone else, which was to protect the storehouses and to be aware of everything that entered and left the storehouses. This was done by checking that all the money that left the storehouse was spent properly and by establishing justice. So, when Yoosuf (Joseph), may Allaah exalt his mention, found that the king had placed him before himself on a lofty status, it was obligatory upon him to advise the king. When he was appointed over the storehouses he strove to improve the system of agriculture."²

Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, says:

"The difference between lust for leadership and desiring it for the purpose of calling to Allaah, is like the

¹ Reported by As-Si'di in his book Bahjat Quloob Al-Abraar (105-106).

² Reported by As-Si'di in his book Bahjat Quloob Al-Abraar (106).



difference between glorifying Allaah's commands, advising people to comply with those commands, and glorifying oneself and seeking to achieve personal interests. The one who advises others for the sake of Allaah, glorifies Him and loves Him, wishes for His Lord to be obeyed and therefore does not disobey Him. This kind of person wants Allaah's word to be predominant and for all religion to be Allaah's alone. He wishes for all people to obey Allaah's commands and to avoid what He forbids. He advises people to worship Him and advises them by inviting them to Allaah's religion. This type of person loves the ruling of religion and asks Allaah to make him one of the pious who are a good example for people to learn from, like he learnt from the good example of the pious.

This is different from the person who has a lust for leadership. Such people seek to attain leadership for their own personal interests, such as gaining high status, enslaving others and making them incline towards them and aid them in all their interests. They wish to achieve a high rank and to be in charge of others. So, it is clear that there are many disadvantages which result from their seeking leadership the extent of which only Allaah knows. Some of those are oppression, jealousy, grudges, Fitnah (trials), defending oneself instead of Allaah, glorifying the ones Allaah has humiliated and humiliating the ones Allaah has honored. Worldly



leadership cannot be established without all of these disadvantages and so many more.¹”

Various forms of the lust for leadership:

There are two forms of leadership, according to the rule:

- 1) Worldly leadership
- 2) Leadership through religious knowledge

Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

“Seeking honor is of two types. The first is seeking honor through rule and wealth. This is very dangerous and in most cases it prevents the prospects of a good afterlife and the honor, dignity and glory of the Hereafter. Allaah Says (what means): *{That home of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.}* [QUR’AAN: 28:83]² He then said, the second type is seeking honor and high rank through religious matters, such as knowledge, performing good deeds and asceticism. This type is even worse and more abominable than the first, as it leads to greater corruption and danger. This is because knowledge, good deeds and asceticism are sought to gain high rank, happiness and closeness to Allaah, the

¹ Reported by Ibn Al-Qayyim in his book Ar-Rooh (252-253).

² Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi’baan Jaa’ia’an (29).



Almighty. Ath-Thawri, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: 'Knowledge has a high virtue because it is a means to fearing Allaah. Otherwise it would be equal to all other things.' When somebody seeks these things for a worldly, perishable purpose then it is also of two types:

- 1) To seek money for forbidden purposes.**
- 2) To seek knowledge, perform good deeds and practice asceticism for the purpose of ruling people and to be ranked above them.**

This person also wishes for people to submit, surrender and yield to him. He also wants to show off with his knowledge to people and scholars to attain a higher rank than them. This person's destiny is Hellfire. Being arrogant to others is forbidden in itself, but when it is used as a tool it is even worse and more disgraceful than using the tools of this world such as wealth and rule. Ka'b ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *'Whoever seeks knowledge to show off with the ignorant people, or to argue with the scholars, or to attract the faces of the people towards him, Allaah would enter him into the Hellfire.'*^{1,2}

¹ Reported by At-Tirmithi (2654).

² Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi'baan Jaa'ia'a (47-53).



There are two cases regarding the lust for leadership:

The first case: Before being appointed as leader: Some people are eager to be in a position of authority and it is apparent, but they may or may not be appointed.

As Allaah Says (what means): *{Whoever should desire the immediate. We hasten for him from it what We will to whom We intend. Then We have made for him Hell, which he will [enter to] burn, censured and banished.}* [QUR'AAN: 17:18].

The second case: After being appointed as leader: A person may not seek leadership, but after being appointed, the heart can get attached to it. He may have been keen for it before and then get even more attached to it after being appointed.

This is because his heart now contains attachment to it plus the fear of losing it.

Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, says: “You must be aware that seeking honor results in great harm before it is found, while seeking it and after it is found.

This is because of the person’s keenness for it and fear of losing it, which can lead to oppression, arrogance, and other disadvantages.”¹

¹ Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi'baan Jaa'ia'a (32).



Different forms of lust for leadership:

These are the main forms:

1) Trying to share His Lofty and Perfect Attributes with Allaah, the Exalted (which are associated with Him alone):

Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, says:

“The worst sin is denial of one's Creator and associating partners with Him, or making oneself a partner with him or a deity other than Him. These have both occurred in history. Fir'awn (Pharaoh) sought to be a deity worshipped other than Allaah.

Allaah Says, (what means):

- *{And Pharaoh said, "O eminent ones, I have not known you to have a god other than me. Then ignite for me, O Haman, [a fire] upon the clay and make for me a tower that I may look at the God of Moses. And indeed, I do think he is among the liars.} [QUR'AAN: 28:38].*
- *{And said, "I am your most exalted lord.} [QUR'AAN: 79:24].*
- *{He (Fir'awn) said to Moosa: {[Pharaoh] said, "If you take a god other than me, I will surely place you among those imprisoned.} [QUR'AAN: 26:38].*

Fir'awn (Pharaoh) deceived his people and they



obeyed him. Iblees (Satan) seeks to be worshipped and obeyed other than Allaah. He wishes to be worshipped and obeyed rather than Allaah. This is the epitome of oppression and ignorance. However, all people and Jinn have a part of these desires in themselves and if not helped and guided by Allaah they can fall into what Iblees (Satan) and Fir'awn (Pharaoh) fell into according to their capabilities.”¹

- 2) **Loss of sincerity in actions and deeds:** The purpose of someone seeking leadership is to reach to it and then protect it. His Walaa' (loyalty and friendship) and Baraa', (disavowal and enmity), what he prevents and what he gives, his love and hate are all for the sake of leadership. Thus, sincerity is lost in his actions and he will perish.
- 3) **Giving up hard work if not granted leadership:** The person will stop working and giving his advice and support to others. He may purposefully make others fail, so that he is given the first place instead of everyone else.
- 4) **Mentioning people's faults and slandering them:** Al-Fudhayl ibn 'Iyaadh, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Anyone who has the lust for leadership, loves to talk about the faults of others, in order to appear perfect. He also hates to hear of someone talking well of another person in front of him. Whoever has the lust for leadership has bid farewell to his piety.”
- 5) **Not informing others of people who are superior to him in religion or knowledge:** He conceals the merits of other

¹ Reported by Ibn Taymiyyah in his book Majmoo' Al-Fataawa (14/323).



people and hides their qualities so as not to lead people to them. This is so they don't abandon him for people who are superior to him. He may fear that he will be compared with those who are superior to him and thus his status would decrease in their eyes.

- 6) Regret and sorrow if the position is taken away from him:** Whoever is continuously worried about this matter will be constantly anxious, worried and extremely regretful if his leadership is taken away from him and given to someone else.
- 7) Being arrogant and ill-treating people:** Al-Miqdaad ibn Aswad, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: "The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, appointed me as ruler. On returning, he asked: *'How did you find ruling?'* I said: 'O Messenger of Allaah! I only thought that people were slaves to me. By Allaah, I shall not take tenure as long as I am alive.'" Ibn Hibbaan, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "People who enter upon the sultan/ruler or are friends with him, must not consider his cursing as cursing, nor his harshness as harshness. Neither should you consider neglecting him a sin, as his glory can only be protected through the harshness of his tongue and hand."²

Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

"Many people, whose friend has gained leadership, request that they should be treated as they were before (the leadership of their friend), but this does not happen. It

¹ Reported by Al-Haakim (3/349).

² Reported by Ibn Hibbaan in his book *Rawdhat Al-'Uqalaa' wa nuzhat Al-Fudhalaa'* (276).



breaks their previous intimacy. This is due to the ignorance of the friend who requests this. It can be compared to the like of asking a drunk friend to have the manners of a sober person. It is not possible, as leadership has an intoxication just like the intoxication of alcohol, or even worse. If the intoxication did not come along with leadership, the person would not choose it over the eternal afterlife. Its drunkenness is even stronger than the drunkenness of coffee. It is not possible for a drunken person to have the manner and attitude of a sober person. Therefore, Allaah commanded His most honorable creation (the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) to address the Coptic leader gently. Addressing leaders in a gentle manner is obligatory in Islaamic law, by logic and by the custom of people. This is why you find people innately inclined to doing so.”¹

- 8) Receiving no help from Allaah with the responsibility the person has taken upon himself:** Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, says: “Rarely do you find someone who seeks leadership in this world, to be aided by Allaah. In fact the person shall be held responsible for himself, as the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said to Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Samaarah, may Allaah be pleased with him: *‘O Abdurrahman! Do not seek to be a ruler, for, if you are given it by your asking, then you will be held responsible for it (i.e. Allaah will not help you) .but if you are given the authority of ruling without your asking for it, then*

¹ Reported by Ibn Al-Qayyim in his book Badaa’i’ Al-Fawaai’d (3/652).



Allaah will help you.”¹

Yazeed ibn Abdullah ibn Mawhib, may Allaah have mercy on him, was a just and pious judge. He would say: “Whoever loves wealth and honor and fears that people will turn against him, shall never be just. Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: ‘You people will be keen to have the authority of ruling which will be a thing of regret for you on the Day of Resurrection. What an excellent wet nurse it is, yet what a bad weaning one it is!’”²

9) Loyalty towards the disbelievers and polytheists: This is well-known in history, as it was practiced by the kings of certain sects in Andalusia. You also find in this age, people who are loyal towards the disbelievers to gain a position in their organizations, a certificate from their universities, or an international prize.

10) Rejecting the truth and not returning to it which leads to innovation and misguidance: Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, says:

“Leadership and its profits are some of the reasons that prevented them (disbelievers) from embracing Islaam. I have debated a group of non-Muslims and so have other scholars. When it became clear to them that they were in a corrupt position, they said: ‘If we were to enter Islam we would be the inferior ones who nobody would

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaari: (7147) and Muslim: (1652).

² Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi’baan Jaa’ia’an (29).



be concerned with. We are in control of our people and their wealth and positions. We have the greatest power amongst them.’ Isn't this what prevented Fir'awn (Pharaoh) and his people from following Moosa (Moses), may Allaah exalt his mention?¹

There are still people who choose falsehood. Some choose falsehood out of ignorance or to imitate people who they think well of. Some choose it with their knowledge of its falseness because of their arrogance. There are others who choose it out of greed and desire to profit or to gain power or leadership. Some choose it out of envy and tyranny. Some choose it out of fear or because it is easier for them. Therefore, the reasons for choosing disbelief are not limited to lust for leadership and profit.²

- 11) Approaching kings and socializing with them: Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, says:** “One of the greatest things to fear when people visit tyrannical kings, is validating their lies and assisting them in their oppression. Even if it is done by being silent and not denying what they say. The one who enters upon them to gain honor and leadership, is not going to deny them. In fact he may even praise their evil actions to gain their approval and to protect his good position or to receive help from the king in his own affairs. Ka'b ibn 'Ujrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *‘There shall be rulers, whoever enters upon*

¹ Reported by Ibn Al-Qayyim in his book Hidaayat Al-Hayaara (15).

² Reported by Ibn Al-Qayyim in his book Hidaayat Al-Hayaara (23).



*them, then aids them in their oppression and validates their lies, then he is not from me nor I from him, and he shall not be admitted to the Hawdh. Whoever does not enter upon them, and does not aid them in their oppression, nor validates their lies, then he is from me and I from him, and he shall be admitted to the Hawdh.”*¹

A number of the Salaf used to forbid entering upon rulers, even if it were for the purpose of enjoining good and forbidding evil. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul-‘Azeez, may Allaah have mercy on him, was one of those who forbade it, in addition to Ibn Al Mubaarak , Ath-Thawri and others, may Allaah have mercy on them. Ibn Al Mubaarak, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “The one who enjoins good and forbids evil among us is not the one who enters upon them, it is the one who secludes himself from them.” The reason for this is the Fitnah which one fears from entering upon them. The person may imagine when away from them, that he is going to enjoin good, forbid evil and be harsh on them, but upon seeing them he finds himself inclined towards them. This is because the love of honor and high rank is hidden inside, and this can lead to being attentive and kind to them. The person may even be drawn towards them and admire them, especially if they treat him well and he accepts it.

¹ Reported by At-Tirmithi (2259).



This happened to Abdullah ibn Taawoos, may Allaah have mercy on him, with some rulers while he was with his father Taawoos, may Allaah have mercy on him. His father reprimanded him for doing so.

Sufyaan At-Thawri, may Allaah have mercy on him, wrote a letter to 'Abbaad ibn 'Abbaad, may Allaah have mercy on him, saying:

“Beware of rulers and getting close to them or meeting them. Don’t be deceived if you are told it is just for you to intercede and to repel evil away from an oppressed person or repel an act of oppression. This is the deceit of Iblees (Satan), and the reciters of Qur’aan who do not act upon it, use this as a means (to their end). If somebody else has given a Fatwa that suffices, and people ask you then you should not try to compete with the other person. Do not be among those who like their Fatwa to be taken or spread among people. Do not be like the ones whose face changes when his Fatwa is not applied by people. Beware of lust for leadership, as it can be desired as much as gold and silver are desired by men. It is an ambiguous issue which is only understood by the insightful scholars. So, be careful in your heart and review your intentions. Be aware that a time is nearing where one wishes to die. Peace be upon you.”¹

Wahb ibn Munabbih, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Accumulating wealth and entering upon rulers does not allow you to hold onto your good deeds, just like two

¹ Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi’baan Jaa’ia’an (64-68).



hungry violent wolves that fall into an enclosure of sheep, and spend that night prowling until morning. ¹Abu Haazim, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “The scholars used to flee from the ruler and he would seek them. Nowadays they come to the ruler's gates and he flees from them.”²

12) The love of fame: Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Also in this matter (seeking leadership through knowledge and good deeds), is that it is disliked for someone to seek fame for one’s self through knowledge, asceticism, and religion, or by showing off with deeds, speech and merits all for the purpose of being visited by people and their appealing to him for his Barakah, Du'aa', while kissing his hand. He likes this, takes pleasure from it and seeks it. This is why the Salaf despised fame, including Ayoob, An-Nakh'ai, Sufyaan, Ahmad and other great scholars, may Allaah have mercy on them. Also, Al-Fudhayl, Daawood At-Taa'i and other people of knowledge, may Allaah have mercy on them. They would disparage themselves and conceal their good deeds.”³

13) Loving to hear themselves praised: Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

“Also related to this matter, is when a person of honor and authority likes to be praised for his actions and requests people to do so. If this is not complied with he may cause harm to them.

His actions may be more deserving of dispraise rather

¹ Reported by Ibn Al-Mubaarak in his book Jami' Bayaan Al-'Ilm (202).

² Reported by Ibn Al-Mubaarak in his book Jami' Bayaan Al-'Ilm (199).

³ Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi'baan Jaa'ia'an (68).



than praise or he may make his actions appear good apparently for praise, whereas his hidden intention is evil. He is happy to blind people from the truth and spread it among people. This is included in the verse, **Allaah Says (what means):** *{And never think that those who rejoice in what they have perpetrated and like to be praised for what they did not do -never think them [to be] in safety from the punishment, and for them is a painful punishment.}* [QUR'AAN: 2:188].

This verse was revealed concerning the people who have this attribute. This attribute of requesting praise from people, and punishing them for not performing it is specifically for Allaah alone with no partner. Therefore, the scholars of guidance would forbid people from praising them for their deeds and their kindness to people. They would command people to direct their praise to Allaah alone, as all blessings are granted by Him. “

‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul-Azeez, may Allaah have mercy on him, was very careful in this matter. He once wrote a letter to be read to the people at Hajj. In this letter, he commanded that they were to be treated kindly and that oppression be lifted from them. It said: “Do not praise anyone but Allaah for this; since, if He had held me responsible for myself I would be just like everyone else.” There is also a story narrated about him regarding a woman who requested him to grant her orphan daughters a stipend. She had four girls and he granted a stipend to two of them.

She praised Allaah for this. He then granted the third girl her



stipend, and the mother thanked him. He said: “We gave this to them when you directed praise to the One Who deserves it (Allaah, the Exalted), so let these three take care of the fourth.” He wanted it to be known that his rule was through carrying out Allaah's command. He commanded people to obey Allaah and he forbade them from approaching what Allaah has forbidden and advised them to invoke Allaah. His intention was that all religion should be Allaah's religion alone and all Glory be to Him, the Exalted. He also feared that he was neglecting Allaah's Rights.¹

14) Telling falsehoods about Allaah, the Exalted, and talking about Him without knowledge:

Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, says:

“Any scholar (from the people of knowledge) who chooses this worldly life (over the Hereafter) and loves it, will undoubtedly speak falsehoods about Allaah in his Fatwaas and rulings.

He will tell people falsehoods and oblige them to apply those falsehoods. This is because many of Allaah's rulings oppose what people desire, especially people of leadership, the ones who follow their desires. Their purposes cannot be achieved without going against the truth.

So if the scholar or ruler is passionate for leadership, and follows his desire, it cannot be achieved unless he

¹ Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi'baan Jaa'ia'an (41-43).



goes against the truth. Especially if there is doubt in it and that doubt agrees with his desire.

This will awaken his desire, and the truth shall disappear.

If the truth is undoubtedly clear, he shall try to go against it and say: 'I have an outlet in repentance!'

Allaah Says about them (what means):

- *{But there came after them successors [i.e. later generations] who neglected prayer and pursued desires; so they are going to meet evil.} [QUR'AAN: 19:59].*
- *{And there followed them successors who inherited the Scripture [while] taking the commodities of this lower life and saying, "It will be forgiven for us." And if an offer like it comes to them, they will [again] take it. Was not the covenant of the Scripture [i.e. the Torah] taken from them that they would not say about Allaah except the truth, and they studied what was in it? And the home of the Hereafter is better for those who fear Allaah, so will you not use reason?} [QUR'AAN: 7:169].*

Allaah, the Exalted, informs us that they took the commodities of this lower life, when they were aware of it being forbidden. They said: 'It will be forgiven for us but if they were offered another offer they would take it, as they insist upon it. This is what leads them to uttering falsehood about Allaah. They say, this is His



ruling, law and religion and they either know that it is otherwise, or not. Sometimes they say about Allaah what they do not know and sometimes what they know to be false. As for the pious ones who fear Allaah, they know that the afterlife is superior to this life and therefore the lust for leadership and desire does not lead them to choosing this life over the afterlife. The way to this is by holding onto the Qur'aan and Sunnah and seeking aid through patience and prayer. Also, thinking of how this life is temporary and shall vanish, whereas the Hereafter is eternal.

The people who have a lust for leadership and desire will innovate in religion and carry out immoral actions. The two shall be joined together, as pursuing desires blinds the heart's vision and prevents one from distinguishing between Sunnah and innovation. It may lead to mixing up between them and perceiving the innovation as Sunnah and the Sunnah as innovation. This is the disease of scholars who prefer this life over the Hereafter and pursue leadership and desire. This verse is about them, Allah Says, (what means): *{And recite to them, [O Muhammad], the news of him to whom We gave [knowledge of] Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became of the deviators. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he*



pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs. So relate the stories that perhaps they will give thought.}
 [QUR'AAN: 7:175-176].

This is the example of the corrupt scholar who acts against his knowledge.”¹

Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, says: “There are several reasons for lying purposefully”, and one of the reasons he mentioned was lust for leadership.”²

15) Hardening of the heart, its attachment to other than Allaah and being preoccupied with other than remembering Allah: Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, says: “The least effect it has on you is distracting you from loving Allaah and His remembrance. Anyone whose wealth distracts him from the remembrance of Allaah, is one of the losers. When the heart is distracted from the remembrance of Allaah, Shaytaan (Satan) shall preoccupy it and direct it to what he wishes.”³

16) Enmity and disunity: Anyone who seeks leadership will accuse others of incapacity and incompetence and seek to exclude that person. This leads to dispute and failure, Allaah Says (what means): {And obey Allaah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient.

¹ Reported by Ibn Al-Qayyim in his book Al-Fawaa'id (100).

² Reported by Ibn Taymiyyah in his book Majmoo' Al-Fataawa (18/46).

³ Reported by Ibn Al-Qayyim in his book 'Uddat As-Saabireen (186).



Indeed, Allaah is with the patient. } [QUR'AAN: 8:46].

The causes of lust for leadership: It is due to Allaah's wisdom and planning, that there is the association of cause and effect. Every behavior has its cause, known or unknown. One of these behaviors is lust for leadership. These are some of the main causes:

- 1) Wanting to be liberated from the authority of others:** The person who seeks leadership does not want anyone to be higher than him (in status and rank). He wishes to be the only commander and the one who forbids everyone. Therefore, you will find him directing the young and old, honorable and weak, male and female, and interfering in every matter, big or small, that is not of his concern.
- 2) It agrees with the innate human desire:** People aspire to be ones who command and forbid others, not to be commanded by others. Humans like to be higher than others in authority and to be praised, in addition to all the other aspects of leadership. Sufyaan At-Thawri, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Rarely do I find someone ascetic regarding leadership. You find people who are ascetic in their food, drink, money and clothing but when disputing over leadership, they defend it and oppose people."¹ Yoosuf ibn Asbaat, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Asceticism in leadership is harder than asceticism in life."² Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "Humans are charged with the love of high rank and

¹ Hilyat Al-Awliyaa' (7/39).

² Hilyat Al-Awliyaa' (8/238).



leadership as much as they are capable of.”¹

3) Weak faith: The absence of faith in the heart or its weakness is the cause of yearning for the desires of this life. One of the greatest of these is leadership. As for the one whose heart is full or nearly full of faith, he declines the offers of this perishing world. He does not have any worry or preoccupation except for the afterlife. Allaah Says (what means): *{That home of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.}* [QUR’AAN: 28:83]. As-Si’di, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Meaning, they do not have the will and desire (for exaltedness), so what about people who work hard to gain high rank above Allaah's creation and are arrogant to them and to the truth.”²

4) Being unaware of the seriousness of bearing this trust: Allaah Says (what means): *{Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear It. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.}* [QUR’AAN: 33:72].

Abu Umaamah, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Any man who rules over ten or more people, will come to Allaah the Exalted in shackles on the Day of Judgment.*

¹ Reported by Ibn Taymiyyah in his book Majmoo' Al-Fataawa (8/218).

² Reported by As-Si’di in his book Tafseer As-Si’di (624).



His hand chained at his neck, it can be loosened with his kindness or he will perish because of his sins. The beginning is blame [from people], the middle is regret and the end is humiliation on the Day of Judgment.”¹

5) The sense of imaginary pleasure: Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Another type of drunkenness is the lust for leadership, money, and revenge. If the lust grows stronger it brings on a drunkenness and this drunkenness causes pleasure that overcomes the person and his mind. The source of this pleasure is perceiving the object of love and when the love and perception are strong, while the mind and judgment are weak it can cause drunkenness. A weak mind can sometimes be overwhelmed because the person is weak and sometimes the object of his love can be very strong. This is why drunkenness is experienced by people who are new to leadership, money, love or alcohol, as opposed to the person who is accustomed to all of these.”²

6) Extreme love for this worldly life: ‘Abdullah ibn Abu Saalih, may Allaah have mercy on him, reported that ‘Eesa, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “O reciters and scholars how can you go astray after the knowledge you have gained, or go blind after having vision, for the sake of this lowly life and inferior desires? Woe unto

¹ Reported by Ahmad (21797) and Al-Albaani stated that it has a good (sound) chain of narrators.

² Reported by Ibn Taymiyyah in his book Al-Istiqamah (2/146).



you, woe unto you!”¹ Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “The source of loving wealth and honor is love for this life, and the source of loving life is pursuing desires.”

Wahb ibn Munabih, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “The objects loved in life are included in the pursuit of desire, and loving life includes the love of wealth and desire. The love of wealth and honor leads to making what is forbidden permissible. The desire for this life happens when pursuing wealth and desire, as desire leads to attachment to this life, wealth and honor, whereas, piety prevents the pursuit of desires and attachment to this life. Allaah Says (what means): *{So as for he who transgressed. And preferred the life of the world. Then indeed, Hellfire will be [his] refuge. But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination. Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge.}* [QUR’AAN: 79:37-41]. Allaah, the Exalted, described the inhabitants of Hell as the owners of wealth and rule, Allaah Says (what means): *{But as for he who is given his record in his left hand, he will say, “Oh, I wish I had not been given my record. And had not known what my account is. I wish it [i.e. my*

¹ Reported by Ibn Al-Mubaarak in his book Jaami’ Bayaan Al-’Ilm (1/233).



death] had been the decisive one. My wealth has not availed me. Gone from me is my authority.} [QUR'AAN: 69:25-29].¹

Is-haaq ibn Khalaf, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Being ascetic in speech, is harder than asceticism in gold and silver (life). Abandoning leadership is harder than abandoning gold and silver as they are the means to reaching leadership.”²

7) Self-conceit: Ibn ‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *“There are three things that destroy you, three that save you, three that expiate [your sins], and three degrees. As for the things that destroy you, they are: surrendering to miserliness, pursuing desires, and self-conceit. As for the things that save you, they are: justice in anger and pleasure, moderation in poverty and affluence, and fearing Allaah in private and public.”³*

Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “The heart is afflicted by other diseases such as, showing off, arrogance, self-conceit, jealousy, pride, lust for leadership and high standing. This disease (lust for leadership), is composed of suspicion and desire. Therefore, false delusions will have to exist (along with

¹ Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi'baan Jaa'ia'an (71).

² Reported by Is-haaq ibn Khalaf in his book Madaarij As-Saalikeen (2/22).

³ Reported by At-Tabaraani (5754) and Al-Albaani ruled it as Hasan.



this disease). Just like self-conceit, pride and arrogance are composed of the person's deluded idea that they have great virtue and merit, and the willingness for people to glorify them and praise them. This disease is free from neither desire nor suspicion, or it is composed of them both. These diseases stem from ignorance and their cure is knowledge. ¹

The cure for lust for leadership

It is by Allaah's mercy upon His slaves that there is no disease without a cure, and one of these diseases is passion of leadership. These are the best cures for it:

1) Making sure you have sincere intentions: Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:

“Wahb ibn Munabih, may Allaah have mercy on him, wrote to Mak-hool, may Allaah have mercy on him, the following: ‘To proceed: you have achieved great honor and rank amongst your people, through the apparent part of your knowledge. So ask Allaah for a high status and closeness with Him through your hidden knowledge and be aware that the existence of one of those statuses prevents the other from existing.’ The meaning of this is that apparent knowledge, i.e. learning the rulings and Fataawa, stories, and sermons etc. that are apparent to people, grants the person high status and honor

¹ Reported by Ibn Al-Qayyim in his book Miftaah Daar As-Sa'aada (1/111).



among those people. As for hidden knowledge that resides in the heart, such as knowing Allaah, fearing Him, loving Him, being aware of Him watching you, feeling comforted and longing to see Him, trusting Him, being content with what He decrees, declining the offers of this perishing world and striving towards the eternal Hereafter, all these guarantee a high status with Allaah, and the existence of one of the aforementioned statuses prevents the other from happening. Therefore, whoever holds onto his worldly status, is preoccupied with his apparent honor in this life, whoever worries to preserve this status and nurtures it fearing that it will come to an end, then that will be his only share from Allaah. Allaah shall abandon him and he shall be this person [about whom it was said]: Woe be upon the one whose only share from Allaah, the Almighty is this world!' ¹

- 2) The person must be denied it when he requests it:** Abu Moosa, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: “Two of my cousins and I entered the apartment of the Holy Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam. One of them said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, appoint us as rulers of some lands that the Almighty has entrusted to your care.’ The other also said something similar. The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *We do not appoint to this*

¹ Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi'baan Jaa'ia'an (80).



position one who asks for it nor anyone who is covetous for the same.”¹ He also reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: “Fear Allah as the most betraying of you to us is the one who asks to be appointed ruler”² Meaning, the one who asks for leadership.

3) Consultation: This is beneficial in two cases:

The first: When someone is offered to be the ruler, he must consult the people of advice and honesty if he is competent or not. It has been narrated on the authority of Abu Tharr, may Allaah be pleased with him, who said: “I said to the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam: ‘O Messenger of Allah, will you not appoint me to a public office?’ He stroked my shoulder with his hand and said: ‘Abu Tharr, you are weak and authority is a trust. On the Day of Judgment it is a cause of humiliation and repentance except for one who fulfills its obligations and [properly] discharges the duties attendant thereon.’³ [In another narration: the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said to me: ‘Abu Tharr, I find that you are weak and I like for you what I like for myself. Do not rule over [even] two persons and do not manage the property of an orphan.’”⁴

Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, says: “He

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaari: (7149).

² Reported by At-Tabaraani and Al-Albaani ruled it as Hasan.

³ Reported by Muslim (1825).

⁴ Reported by Muslim (1826).



(the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) advised Abu Tharr, may Allaah be pleased with him, against ruling because he thought him to be weak, even though it has been narrated that: *“Neither has the sky shaded one more truthful and honest than Abu Tharr, nor has the earth had anyone walk over it like him.”*¹

The second case: Consultation after being appointed as ruler, so the person is not alone in taking decisions and to improve his opinions. Allaah Says (what means): *{So by mercy from Allaah, [O Muhammad sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allaah. Indeed, Allaah loves those who rely [upon Him].}* [QUR’AAN: 2:159].

4) Bearing in mind the negative effects of being appointed as ruler: Ibn Hibbaan, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: **“Rulers are the most anxious of people. They are the ones whose faults are open to everyone, and they have the most enemies. They are the saddest of people, and will be judged severely on the Day of Judgment, and they are the most punished (if not forgiven by Allaah).”**².

Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: **“As for the**

¹ Reported by At-Tirmithi (3801) and Al-Albaani ruled it as Saheeh.

² Reported by Ibn Hibbaan in his book Rawdhat Al-'Uqalaa' wa Nuzhat Al-Fudhalaa' (275).



temporary high rank which comes along with being appointed as ruler, it will end in regret, remorse, and humiliation later on. You should avoid and oppose it.”

There are many reasons to avoid leadership, one of them is when realizing the consequences in the Hereafter of the honor of ruling in this world and not fulfilling the rights. Also, thinking of the punishment of tyrants and arrogant people and those who try to share Allaah’s Pride with Him, the Exalted. ‘Amr ibn Shu’ayb, may Allaah have mercy on him, reported that his brother reported that his father heard the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, say: *“On the Day of Resurrection, the arrogant will be gathered like ants in the form of men. Humiliation will overwhelm them from all sides. They will be driven to a prison in Hell called Bawlas, with the hottest fire will rise over them, and they will be given to drink of the juice of the inhabitants of Hell, which is Teenat Al-Khabaal.”*¹

A man asked ‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, for permission to be a story-teller to people. ‘Umar said: ‘I fear that you will tell them stories and then think yourself higher than them, until Allaah shall place you below their feet on the Day of Judgment.’² Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Also, the seeker of leadership and a high rank in this world is a slave to the people that aid him in seeking leadership. It may seem that he is in charge of them and is obeyed by them, but in reality he

¹ Reported by At-Tirmithi (2492) and he stated that it is Hasan Saheeh.

² Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi’baan Jaa’ia’an (73-75).



begs them, and fears them, therefore he spends his money on them and forgives them, so that they obey him and help him. He appears to be an obeyed ruler, when he is actually an obedient slave to them. The truth is that they both worship each other and both sides have abandoned the true worship of Allaah. If they both falsely help each other in gaining high worldly rank, then they are like the ones who help each other in evil or robbery. Each one is striving for his own interest and desire is enslaved by the other side).¹

- 5) Continuously taking account of oneself, repentance and seeking forgiveness:** Ibn Hibbaan, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “It is obligatory upon the Muslim ruler to turn to Allaah at every moment, so as not to let his ruling dominate him. He must remember Allaah, His Greatness and that He is the one who avenges the oppressed ones and He rewards the ones who do good. In this way, the ruler will behave in a way that leads to reward in this life and the Hereafter. He should also learn a lesson from his predecessors. He is responsible for being grateful for the position he is in and he is also responsible for taking his actions into account.”²
- 6) Preoccupying oneself with knowledge and not discontinuing it:** ‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: “Acquire a good understanding in religion, before you are made rulers.” Abu ‘Abdullah Al-Bukhaari, may

¹ Reported by Ibn Taymiyyah in his book Al-Fataawa (10/189).

² Reported by Ibn Hibbaan in his book Rawdhat Al-'Uqalaa' wa Nuzhat Al-Fudhalaa'(277)



Allaah have mercy on him, said: “And after you are made rulers”. The Companions even sought knowledge at an old age. Hassan ibn Mansoor Al-Jassaas, may Allaah have mercy on him, reported that he asked Ahmad ibn Hanbal, may Allah have mercy on him: “Until when does a man write (learn)?” He said: “Until death.”¹

- 7) Asceticism in this life and attachment to the afterlife and competing in it:** Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Be aware that the human self loves high rank and status above others. This is where pride and jealousy stem from. However, the logical person competes for the eternal high status through pleasing Allaah and being close to Him. This person turns away from the false high status that will vanish and leads to Allaah's anger. The person who seeks high worldly rank will be degraded and humiliated. He will be banished away from Allaah. This is the second type of high status which is dispraised; it includes pride and arrogance. As for the first type it is good to seek, as Allaah Says (what means): *{The last of it is musk. So for this let the competitors compete.}* [QUR'AAN: 83:26].”²

Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “This world is worthless, and everything considered great in it is small. Its purpose is leadership and wealth. The purpose of rulers is to be like Fir'awn (Pharaoh) whom Allaah drowned in the sea as revenge. The purpose of wealthy people is to be like Qaaron (Korah) on whom Allaah

¹ Tabaqaat Al-Hanaabilah (1/140).

² Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi'baan Jaa'ia'an (73-75).



overturned the earth, where he resides until the Day of Judgment.¹

- 8) Thinking of how Allaah will compensate His slave in this life when he avoids leadership:** Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Included in this (it is not gained by the slave's ability, it is from Allaah's mercy) is how Allaah will replace the perishable wealth and honor of this world, for his ascetic slaves who know Him. He will replace them in this life with the honor of piety and high respect from people on the outside. He shall grant them the sweetness of knowledge, faith and obedience on the inside. This is the good life that Allaah has promised to whoever performs good deeds, as believers, whether men or women. This good life has not been experienced by kings and rulers on earth, nor by the people who seek honor and leadership. As Ibraaheem ibn Ad-ham, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: 'If kings and their sons knew what we are upon they would fight us for it with their swords.'”²
- 9) A person's first concern** should be serving this religion and benefitting people from whatever position he has: On the authority of Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *“Let the slave of Dinar and Dirham, of Qateefah and Khameesah perish as he is pleased if these things are given to him, and if not he is displeased. Let such a person perish and relapse, and if he is pierced with a*

¹ Reported by Ibn Taymiyyah in his book Majmoo' Al-Fataawa (28/615).

² Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi'baan Jaa'ia'an (76).



*thorn, let him not find anyone to take it out for him. Tooba [all kinds of happiness or a tree in Paradise] is for him who holds the reins of his horse to strive in Allaah's cause, with his hair unkempt and feet covered with dust: if he is appointed in the vanguard, he is perfectly satisfied with his post of guarding, and if he is appointed in the rear guard, he accepts his post with satisfaction; [he is so simple and non-ambitious that] if he asks for permission he is not permitted, and if he intercedes, his intercession is not accepted."*¹

Ibn Hajar, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"If he is appointed in the vanguard, he is perfectly satisfied with his post of guarding, and if he is appointed in the rear guard, he accepts his post with satisfaction"* meaning that, if it is essential to take on the post of guarding, he will do it." **Ibn Jawzi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said:** "This means that he is indifferent and does not seek high status and does whatever he is told to do. It is as if the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, is saying: if he is in the post of guarding he continues, and if he is in the post of rear guard he continues. *'If he asks for permission he is not permitted, and if he intercedes, his intercession is not accepted.'* This implies that he has no desire for leadership or fame and the virtue of

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaari (2887).



indifference and humility.”¹

10) Being aware of the responsibility of ruling as it is a duty and not an honor: Ibn ‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam said: *“Anyone whom Allaah appoints as ruler upon people, shall surely be asked by Allaah on the Day of Judgment about those people [he ruled over], as to whether he established Allaah’s Word with them or neglected it. Until he asks him specifically about his family.”*²

‘Awf ibn Maalik, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *“I shall inform you of what ruling is. The first thing is blame [from people], the second is regret, and the third is punishment on the Day of Judgment, except for the ones who are just.”*³

Abu Hurayrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: *“A time will come when people who ruled wished that they had fallen from the sky, rather than rule people.”*⁴

11) A person should know his own value/worth: This way he knows if can perform this task and responsibility or not. If he finds that he cannot perform it, then he shall not try to.

¹ Reported by Ibn Hajar in his book Fat-h Al-Baari (6/83).

² Reported by Ahmad: (4623) and Shu‘ayb Al-Arna’oot ruled it as Saheeh (authentic).

³ Reported by At-Tabaraani (6747) and Al-Albaani ruled it as Saheeh (authentic).

⁴ Reported by Ahmad (10359) and Al-Albaani ruled it as Hasan (sound).



Abu Tharr, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: “*Abu Tharr, you are weak and authority is a trust. On the Day of Judgment it is a cause of humiliation and repentance except for the one who fulfills its obligations and [properly] discharges the duties attendant thereon.*”¹ Al-Qurtubi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Meaning, he was too weak to perform the tasks of a ruler, such as taking into consideration the worldly and religious interests of his people. The reason behind his weakness was his asceticism and contempt for this life. So, because of his condition he would not take care of the worldly interests and money which would have to be taken care of for religious interests also. As the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, was aware of this point he advised him against ruling and taking charge of the money of orphans.”²

12) To always praise Allaah and advise others to do so also:
Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “The successors of prophets and their followers, i.e. the just rulers, their followers and judges, do not ever call to glorifying themselves. They call to glorifying Allaah alone and to singling him out with worship. Some of them did not want to rule, except for the sole purpose of calling to Allaah alone. Some pious people used to be in charge of

¹ Reported by Muslim (1826).

² Reported by Al-Qurtubi in his book Haashiyat As-Suyooti ‘ala sunan An-Nisaa’i (6/255).



justice as judges, saying: ‘I take this responsibility to enjoin good and forbid evil.’ This is why the prophets, may Allaah exalt their mention, and their followers were patient in calling to Allaah, with the harm they endured. They patiently endured the hardship and troubles they received from people, while implementing Allaah’s command. They were even content with it deriving pleasure from that harm when it was for the sake of pleasing their beloved. This is what ‘Abdul-Maalik ibn ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul-‘Azeez, may Allaah have mercy on him, said to his father as his sole concern was implementing the truth and establishing justice: ‘O father! I would like for you and I to be boiled in cauldrons if it were for the sake of Allaah.’”¹

13) To exert power for the purpose of aiding people: This is by interceding for the needy and striving to meet their needs. Ibn Abu Ya’laa, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Abu Muzaahim Moosa ibn ‘Ubyadillah ibn Yahya ibn Khaaqaan, may Allaah have mercy on him, reported that his father heard his father say: “I was with Al-Hasan ibn Sahl, may Allaah have mercy on him, when a man came to him asking him to intercede for one of his needs. So he interceded and the man thanked him. Al-Hasan ibn Sahl, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: ‘What do you thank me for? We believe that power/high standing has its Zakaat (alms) just like wealth has Zakaat (that must be paid.)’”

14) The slave of Allaah must direct what Allaah has put in

¹ Reported by Ibn Rajab in his book Sharh Hadeeth Maa Thi’baan Jaa’ia’an (45-46).



his heart of loving power and high standing in the right way: Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “The intensity of loving power and high standing can be utilized the right way and that is by using it to implement Allaah’s commands and to establish His religion. This is by coming to the assistance of the oppressed, aiding the weak, and restraining Allaah’s enemies. The love of leadership and power used this way is a form of worship.”¹

15) Reading about and pondering on the lives of the pious

Salaf: ‘Aamir ibn Sa’d, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “Sa’d ibn Abu Waqqaas, may Allaah have mercy on him, was with his camels, when his son Umar, may Allaah have mercy on him approached him. When Sa’d saw him, he said: ‘I seek refuge with Allaah from the evil of this rider.’ Umar descended and said: ‘Have you stayed with your camels and sheep and left the people disputing over authority?’ Sa’d patted him on the chest and said: ‘Silence! I heard the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, say: *‘Allaah loves the pious rich man who is inconspicuous.’*”² An-Nawawi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “The meaning of ‘**rich**’ here is the richness of one’s self. This is a desirable kind of richness. As for ‘*inconspicuous*’, it means indifferent and immersed in worship and one’s own affairs.”³

A person may even disclaim his leadership for someone else for the sake of a higher interest: For instance, what

¹ Reported by Ibn Al-Qayyim in his book At-Tibyaan fi Aqsaam Al-Qur’aan. (259).

² Reported by Muslim (2965).

³ Reported by An-Nawawi in his book Sharh An-Nawawi ‘ala Muslim (18/100).



Al- Hasan Ibn ‘Ali, may Allaah be pleased with him, did by abdicating from his rule for Mu’aawiyah, may Allaah be pleased with him, and the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, had praised him for this. Abu Bakrah, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: “*This son of mine is a master. Perhaps Allaah will make peace between two great parties through him.*”¹ Al-Mubarakpoori, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “This is one of the Prophet’s, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, great miracles, as he informed of this and it happened exactly the way he informed.”²

They would stay away from rule if there was somebody more deserving of it: As in the story of the appointment of Abu Bakr, may Allaah be pleased with him, as ruler and the Companions’ pledging alliance with him, which is a great example of this. ‘Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: “Abu Bakr delivered a sermon, and said: ‘I am pleased to suggest that you choose either of these two men, so take the oath of allegiance to either of them as you wish.’ And then Abu Bakr held my hand and Abu ‘Ubaadah’s hand who was sitting amongst us. I hated nothing of what he had said except that proposal, for by Allaah, I would rather have my neck chopped off as expiation for a sin than become the ruler of a nation, one of whose members is Abu Bakr.”³

¹ Reported by Al-Bukhaari (2704).

² Reported by Al-Mubaarakpoori in his book Tuhfat Al-Ahwathi (10/189).

³ Reported by Al-Bukhaari (6830).



Another example of this: When ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul-'Azeez, may Allaah have mercy on him, was appointed as ruler, the guard came to walk in front of him with his spear as was the tradition with the previous caliphs. ‘Umar, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: “What is wrong? Leave me, I am a Muslim man!” Then he went with the people following him, until they entered the mosque. He went up to the pulpit where people gathered around him and said: “O people! I have been tested with this matter without my opinion being taken into consideration and without requesting it and with no consultation from the Muslims. I have broken the oath of allegiance from your necks, so choose for yourself who you want (as ruler).” The Muslims all shouted together: “We have chosen you and we all approve of you.” He then delivered a sermon to them.¹

Faatimah, the wife of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul-'Azeez, may Allaah have mercy on them, reported that she entered upon him while he was praying with his hand on his cheek, tears streaming down. She said: “O Amir Al-Mu’mineen has something happened?” He said: “O Faatimah, I have taken upon myself the authority of ruling the Ummah of Muhammad. I have thought of the poor and hungry, the lost and sick, the one who has nothing to clothe him, the oppressed and subdued, the foreign captive, the old people who have children on this earth. I realized that Allaah is going to ask me about them and that my adversary is Muhammad (instead of them) and so I feared that I will not have an excuse when prosecuted. I felt sorry

¹ Reported by Ibn Katheer in his book *Al-Bidaayah wa An-Nihaayah* (9/238).



for myself and wept.”¹

16) Du'aa': On the authority of Ma'qil ibn Yasaar, may Allaah be pleased with him: “I went with Abu Bakr, may Allaah be pleased with him, to the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, and he said: ‘*O Abu Bakr, Shirk amongst you is more hidden than the crawling of an ant.*’ Abu Bakr, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: ‘*Isn’t Shirk associating another deity with Allaah?*’ The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: ‘*By the one whose hands my soul is in, Shirk amongst you is more hidden than the crawling of an ant and I shall tell you of something which, if you do it, will remove from you both the minor and the major Shirk. Say: Allahumma inni a’udhu bika an ushrika bika wa ana a’lamu wa astaghfiruka lima laa a’lam [O Allaah, surely I seek refuge in you from knowingly worshiping others besides you and I seek your forgiveness for what I don’t know].*”²

We ask Allaah to help and guide us, and make us from the obedient slaves to Him, seeking His pleasure and praise be to Allaah, Lord of the worlds.

¹ Reported by At-Thahabi in his book Siyar A’alaam An-Nubala’ (5/131).

² Reported by Al-Bukhaari (716).



Conclusion

Indeed, it is regrettable that we see such a large number of people dispute between themselves to access a high position and leadership. It has become the dominant concern for a person to be a leader, head or imam in ways that often result in disunity among Muslims.

It stirs trials and causes unrest among them. The prevalence of this disease, the lust for leadership, undoubtedly results in wasting energy, expands the circle of differences and the pursuit of personal interest, and results in the failure to practice faith correctly.

We have had enough of this evil which has caused great havoc to the individual, society and the Ummah. By returning to the Book of Allaah, The Almighty, the Sunnah of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and by following the path of our first predecessors we can avoid this slippery slope and return to the true religion.

We ask Allaah, The Almighty, for guidance to the straight path. Peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, and all his family and Companions.



Test yourself

There are two levels of questions, direct questions and deductive questions.

Level one: Direct questions

- 1) What are the benefits of ruling and authority?
- 2) Lust for leadership is a severe disease, what are some of its main forms?
- 3) What are the causes of lust for Leadership?
- 4) As every disease has a cure, what is the cure for the lust for Leadership?

Level two: Deductive questions

- 1) Why is the lust for leadership called 'the hidden desire'?
- 2) What is the meaning of the following Hadeeth?
- 3) Ka'b ibn Maalik Al-Ansaari, may Allaah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, said: *"Two hungry wolves let loose amongst a flock of sheep cause less harm than a man's eagerness to increase his money and his prestige."*
- 4) How can the lust for leadership and life corrupt your religion?
- 5) What do you understand from the following words of Yoosuf (Joseph), may Allaah exalt his mention, to the King of Egypt, as mentioned in the Qur'aan?



- 6) **Allaah Says (what means):** *{Appoint me over the storehouse of the land. Indeed, I will be a knowing guardian.}* [QUR'AAN: 12:55].
- 7) **When is a person helped by Allaah in ruling and authority? Mention the evidence for this.**
- 8) **When is asking for leadership considered an act of worship that you will be rewarded for?**

