

A Heart Cannot Have Two Masters June 19, 2026

Yawma la yanfa'u maalun walaa banoon. Illa men eta'Allahe biqalbin seleem Sadaqallah (Surah Ash-Shu'ara 26:88-80)

The Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit, except those who return to Allāh with a sound heart.

The heart is the core of our spiritual center. If the core of our spiritual center becomes sick, the whole being suffers as well. The symptoms of a physical ailment are readily visible. We recognize them through weakness, fatigue, and a faded appetite for life. The world loses its color; food loses its taste; loved ones bring less joy, and even the simple comfort of morning coffee disappears. Yet, the symptoms of a diseased spiritual heart are not immediately noticeable by the afflicted one. A person may walk through life with a heart in decay and feel nothing at all. This is why the sickness of the spiritual heart is quite dangerous. The doctor of our spiritual hearts, the Prophet Muhammed (saw) and those who followed his path, showed us how to diagnose the diseases of the heart, and how to cure specific ailments.

Just as a sick body cannot taste the true flavor of food, a diseased heart cannot experience the sweetness of worship. True worship goes beyond the rituals of facing the Ka'aba, and reciting verses on a prayer rug. It is the outward expression of an inner devotion to the only One, Al-Ahad, who has no equal and no resemblance to anything. The sweetness of such devotion cannot be felt when the heart is sick. Often we wonder if our heart is sick or healthy. One of the indicators of a healthy spiritual heart is the feeling of deep sense of discomfort and feeling of remorse when we do wrong. Not feeling any remorse and regret after a wrong doing is an indication that the heart is either sick or dead. Ibn al-Qayyim offers an assurance for a heart that still beats; he says: "If you feel a darkness in your heart after committing a sin, that feeling is a proof that the light in your heart still remains. Without that light, you would never perceive the darkness."

The other indicator of a healthy heart is tasting sweetness and joy when you perform acts of obedience for Allah-u T'aala. These are healthy heart beats and indication that there is hope. A man once asked the Prophet (saw) about faith; he replied: "If your good deeds make you happy and your bad deeds make you sad, then you are a believer." So, feeling remorse indicates that the heart still has a pulse, but one must act quickly and treat the affliction through regret, and turn the heart back to Allah without delay.

In order to keep our hearts healthy, we must first understand the true nature of the heart, and the main reason why it becomes sick. The primary purpose of the heart is to be completely devoted to its creator. A healthy heart is one that is 'ever-seeking Allah,' 'always present,' and entirely undistracted from its Creator. As revealed in Surah Al -Azhab: "Allah did not put two hearts in a man's chest," meaning the heart is intended to have only one master. (33:4) It is not designed to have multiple masters. This means that whoever owns our hearts, owns us. Sickness of the heart starts the moment we allocate part of our hearts to the devotion of someone else other than Allah. When we give the ownership of our hearts to other "ilahs", or gods, then harmony and integrity are lost, and the heart becomes like a broken mirror.

The Arabic word for god is *ilah*. Fundamentally, it is defined as that to which the heart is deeply attached, and toward which the soul naturally inclines in love, fear, hope, and absolute trust. When we declare that there is no *ilah* but Allah, we are proclaiming that Allah is the true owner of our hearts, and that there is no room for any other 'ilahs.' In this sense, the true Beytullah, (House of Allah), is the heart of the believing servant. The One who created and chose our hearts as His Beytullah refuses to share it with anyone else. Once true faith enters the heart, it cannot be divided among multiple idols. In a Hadith Qudsi, Allah says: "I am the least in need of any partner. So whoever does a deed seeking Me and someone else, I leave him to that someone else." This means that if you seek masters other than Him, He will make that worldly pursuit a tyrannical master over you. What a profound punishment it is to be left to the mercy of the creation, after being offered the infinite mercy of the Creator.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, "Religion is sincerity." This means that without *ihlas* (sincerity), there is no true religion and no genuine submission. In Surah Al-Ihlas, we recite "*Huwal-lahu Ahad*"—proclaiming that He is Allah, the One and Only, and that there is none like Him. True *ihlas* demands that our hearts stop seeking, inclining toward, fearing, or hoping in any other gods. Allah is far too perfect to be compared, too great to be shared, and too necessary to be replaced; nothing can ever take His place. When we recite Surah Al-Ihlas and declare His unique oneness, we negate all partners and rivals. By directing our devotion exclusively to the One, we liberate ourselves from the slavery of all false gods. This is the ultimate sincerity in faith; without it, religion cannot truly exist, and being a Muslim loses its profound meaning. That is why the path of Islam begins and ends with *ihlas*.

Ultimately, the primary reason our hearts fall sick is that worldly distractions fracture them into a thousand pieces. By letting these attachments consume us, we mistakenly place temporary idols into the Beytullah, the House of Allah, where they simply do not belong. We may no longer live in an ancient world of stone-carved deities, but the habit of placing our ultimate fear and hope in something other than Allah is alive and well—it has simply changed its appearance.

Today, we are bombarded by a cacophony of voices screaming for our attention, leaving our hearts fractured and divided. Our careers, boundless ambitions, and digital obsessions have become the new gods, demanding the sacrifice of our prayers, our families, and our moral principles. Worship did not end when we stopped carving wood and stone. Today's idols wear different outfits; they live on screens and stages rather than in shrines. But make no mistake.:They demand the exact same thing those ancient statues did: our undivided loyalty, our love, and our devotion. What they give in return is a miserable life and a sick heart

Yurdaer Al Latif Al Jerrahi