Catching thoughts - Ibn Al Jawzi (ra)

Day 1

21st December 2014

These are glimpses into an interesting book by Ibn Al-Jawzi (ra) - Catching thoughts. In the introduction of his book, Ibn Al-Jawzi (ra) says that he has many reflections and thoughts. The thoughts a person has, depends on how much experience and how much knowledge a person has. The thoughts Ibn Al Jawzi (ra) had are important thoughts because of the wisdom he gained with experience and knowledge. He said, he had many thoughts that crossed his mind, but if he didn’t write it down, it would disappear. Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ) used to say, you need trap the knowledge with writing. That’s why Ibn Al Jawzi (ra) said he wanted to follow what our beloved Messenger (ﷺ) said.

This book has many interesting thoughts, although it was written a long time ago, we can still benefit from the experiences and thoughts of Ibn Al Jawzi (ra).

Ibn Al Jawzi (ra) was a prominent scholar of the past. Even the Khalifah of his time used to pray behind him. 100,000 used to attend his study circles. 200,000 people became Muslim with him. He has 600 books. This is just a brief about him. May Allah (SWT) be pleased with him.

So many of the current scholars are making explanations of this book. The book has many thoughts but we will just look at those that relate to us in shaa Allah and we will look at them in general.

Let us now travel with the thoughts of Ibn Al Jawzi (ra).

1- Thought - The heedless and the alert

These are his observations of the condition of a person after listening to the lessons and admonition. When a person attends a lecture, it is as if he has got a wake-up call. But as soon as the person departs from the study circle, the heedlessness and hardening of the heart returns to him. This is what you can notice in reality, we notice this in ourselves. While we are in the study circles we really feel motivated- I want to be among the patient ones, grateful ones, etc. This is a wake-up call. But as soon as we depart and separate from the study circle, the heedlessness and hardening of heart returns to us. Imagine, he had so much experience. He then says, I was looking for a reason for this, until I found it. Then I saw the people are at different levels in this matter.

The reasons for this are:

1- The lesson and admonition only hits him like a flash- but after a while the effect is gone.

Imagine, Allah (SWT) knows the things we need, that's why he makes us listen to the things that we need for our reformation. When I feel pain when I hear something, that
means it is what I need. That’s why I will wake up, but when I go out the pain slowly slowly goes away.

2- The mindset with which he came to the study circle

He attended the study circle wanting to be reformed, increase in faith, etc. As if you are preparing, to be in the mood of listening. As soon as a person is out of the study circle- the mindset changes.

It was narrated that Hanzalah Tamimi Al-Usaiyidi, the scribe, said:

“We were with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and we spoke of Paradise and Hell until it was as if we could see them. Then I got up and went to my family and children, and I laughed and played (with them). Then I remembered how we had been, and I went out and met Abu Bakr, and said: ‘I have become a hypocrite!’ Abu Bakr said: ‘We all do that.’” So Hanzalah went and mentioned that to the Prophet (ﷺ), who said: “O Hanzalah, if you were (always) as you are with me, the angels would shake hands with you in your beds and in your streets. O Hanzalah, there is a time for this and a time for that.” (English reference: Vol. 5, Book 37, Hadith 4239)

These are the two reasons for being heedless or alert- the reminder is like a flash and mindset at the time of attending a study circle.

That’s why we need to renew intention and fix our mindset every time we attend a study circle.

This is the condition of everybody. Except for those who are really alert, (owners of alertness).

You will realize those who are alert, the impact of the lesson remains for a longer duration- an hour, a day, a week, a month- it varies on how long the impact will remain.

You notice this in yourself, when you hear things that relate to you- there is more impact.

The conditions of the people:

Those with determination, without any hesitation

The best group are those on whom the impact of the lesson remained for longer time. They are those who have determination. Very alert, observing, strong will to change.

He just goes forward without looking back. Doesn’t care about others. “I listened, apply it from today.” The impact of the lesson is more than the other person. But he is also a human being, at the end he will go back to heedlessness, but not as quickly as the other groups.

Oh Allah, I ask you for determination in following the right path!

Those who have in their nature heedlessness and laziness, but sometimes the sermons urge them to do good, as if dictated by a wind.

This is the second group of the people. Sometimes the admonitions and advices can encourage them to do the deeds. As if the wind will carry them- like a grain flying with the
wind. Those people move to do good deed like a grain moving in the wind. These are all from the experiences of Ibn Jawzi (ra) from interacting with all these people.

Those whom the reminder will not affect them, except in the time of the lesson
This is the third group of people. All of these groups are from those who are really listening to the lecture, but the differences are in the duration that they take to return to heedlessness. Majority are in this group. The reminder will not effect them except in that time- in the time of the lesson. As soon as the lesson is over, they go back to their previous state. Like as if water is falling on a rock. You will notice all these in yourself, starting from this level. Alhamdulillah even this stage is good, at least he will listen attentively at the time. Depends on the purity of your heart- how much longer you can carry it.

Previously, maybe we didn’t want to listen also.

Those with determination, all the time, they want to change and to go forward.

May Allah (SWT) make us to listen to the good words and to apply it.
This needs a pure heart.

Now the next thought.. keep in mind that these are random thoughts and not in any particular order.

2- Thought- The Benefit of looking at the consequence
(الخاطرة- فوائد النظر فه العواقب)

With insight, one understand the consequence of doing good and also how one will be saved from evil (by abstaining from it).

For example, when we listen about something good, memorizing for example, I am not doing it or even about sins, I know about them, yet I am falling into it. Why is that?? It is because the good deeds appears difficult from outside and the bad deeds appear easy from outside.
Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ) told us about Paradise being surrounded by hardship/obligations and Hell-fire being surrounded by desires/temptations.
You need to overcome yourself in order to go to Paradise. At the time of doing good deeds, it will be difficult, as if there is a pain. But for sins, they are easy at the time of doing it.
But as soon as you will overcome yourself, when you do the good deed it is as if you are in Paradise, so sweet. And as soon as you do sin, it will be misery.
That’s why what is important is- to look at the result, and not at that moment.
This needs insight and not the sight of the eyes.
A person with such an insight will get all the good and be protected from all the evil.
Now we realize why we fall, because of our short vision.
We need to look at the consequence of the deeds.

He said, the one not looking at the consequence, will only see the pain while doing good deeds, and will not have that peace and tranquility. He is only thinking about ‘now’.
On the other hand, we need to focus on result, and overcome our self at the time of doing good/bad deeds.

Now we can understand why people put so much effort for the sins and for the good deeds they are unaffected by any amount of reminders and encouragement. Because they are only thinking about ‘now’.

Allah (SWT) didn’t leave us without guidance- He tells us details about Paradise and Hell-fire. This is actually the result which we need to look at with our insight and not with our eyes.

When you see the result- you don’t see the pain, you will be in Paradise, you will see the sweetness. The misery following the sin, overcomes the sweetness felt when doing the sin.

If you disobey Allah, where is the sweetness of the sin?? (ان عصيت الله---فأين نذا الاصيي ؟)

If you obey Allah, where is the difficulty of the obedience?? (ان أطعت الله---فأين تعب الطاعة ؟)

Imagine, for the fasting person, there is 2 joys. This joy is felt despite the difficulty.

Both of them will not remain- the delight of the sins and the pain of the obedience. Both will be replaced with the opposite.

Watch and observe the consequence. (تسلم العواقب فراقب). This is what we need to do. Don’t think about the pain while doing good or the sweetness when doing sin

ولا تمل مع هوى الحس فتنتم

Don’t rely on the feelings- it will go. Like a wind.
We are only thinking about what we are feeling ‘now’ just think of how beautiful it will be later- how you will enjoy in Paradise, under the shade of the throne of Allah, with the company of Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)! May Allah (SWT) grant us this eternal delight!