

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلّٰهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ
شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ
لَهُ، وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ. وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ
لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

All Praise be to اللّٰهُ .

We praise him and ask him for help and forgiveness. We ask him for protection from the evilness within ourselves and from our own bad deeds. Whom-so-ever God guides to the truth no one can lead astray, and whom-so-ever He leaves misguided, no one has the power to guide.

I testify that there is no God but اللّٰهُ to whom there is no partner and I testify that Muhammad ﷺ is his servant and messenger

وَأَنْتَقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ
وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ



“And guard yourselves from the Day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then every soul shall be recompensed what it has earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly” (S2, A281)



Dear Brothers and sisters, ASA. The topic for today's khutbah is something that we have covered in the past. I am glad that this is the mid-term break and that we have many families and children with us today. The topic relates to one of the major sins, "Al-Kaba'ir", but due to many factors, many of us have become accustomed to take this major sin extremely lightly. The reason for going through this topic again is to remind myself and all of us of the significant nature of this devastating sin.

This sin has been mentioned on numerous occasions in the Glorious Quran and covered by many traditions of the Prophet(SAAWS). It is considered as a major sin because it can corrupt our society and destroy it and it can throw the Muslim in the deepest levels of Hellfire. Have we guessed what this devastating sin is?

Allah(SWT) commands us in the Holy Quran in Surat Al-Ahzaab:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٢)

“O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, for indeed some suspicions are sins. And do not spy nor backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it. And be mindful of your duty to Allah. Truly Allah is the one who accepts repentance, Most Merciful” (Al-Ahzaab, 49: 12)

Brothers and sisters, this major sin is backbiting. Backbiting is defined as speaking behind the back of your brother or sister of something that they do not like. Isn't it amazing that even in English, the term is "back-biting", as if you are taking a bite of your brothers back.

Brothers and sisters, Islam is the "Deen" of truth, the "Deen" of peace and tranquillity, the "Deen" of honesty and of unity. What do you think a Muslim is doing to his or her "Deen" when they indulge in backbiting? Islam is alien to lies, suspicion, backbiting, slander and gossip. The Muslim believer should feel abhorred by all these erosive and corrosive behaviours.

The Quran states that we should abhor such behaviour as much as we would abhor eating the flesh of our dead brother. There is no mincing of words here, backbiting is an abhorrent behaviour.

Amr bin al-Aass, while travelling with his companions, once passed by the dead, rotting body of a mule and said: "I swear by Allah, it is better that one of you should eat from this until he fills his stomach than for him to eat the flesh of a Muslim (backbiting)."

Sufyan bin Uyaynah said: "Backbiting is worse than a debt. A debt can be paid out, but backbiting cannot."

This is how the Quran tells us about backbiting, and this is how the Sahabah understood the serious nature of this abhorrent behaviour. Yet, we now take it, as we take many other issues, very lightly. Muslims are not alone in this and backbiting is widespread, however, we Muslims have a clear guideline in the Quran and the Prophet(SAAWS) and we cannot ignore that.

Allah(SWT) has given us clear guidance to help us and to guard against “Fitnah” and the corruption of our community. Some may jump up and say; hold on a minute, what I am saying about my Muslim brother or sister is true and I am trying to protect my community. If you really think this gives you the excuse to backbite, then listen to this and think again.

The Prophet(SAAWS) said :*"Do you know what backbiting is?" The companions said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "It is to say something about your brother that he would dislike." One of the companions asked; "But what if what I say is true?" The Messenger of Allah said, "If what you say about him is true, you are backbiting him, but if it is not true then you have slandered him."* (Muslim)

Brothers and sisters, backbiting is not saying that which is not true, that would be slander. Backbiting is to say something about your brother or sister that which is true, but your brother or sister would dislike that to be said about them. This includes anything and everything that they may dislike. ISA at the end of the khutbah, I will mention the very few occasions when one can say something that is true, but this is in a very limited remit.

The next issue with backbiting is for one who is willing to actively listen to what is being said about their brother and sister, almost revelling in what they are hearing and worst still, pass it on. Listen to what the Holy Quran guides us:

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ

“Behold, you welcomed it on your tongues, and said out of your mouths things which you had no knowledge of; and you thought it to be a light matter, while it was most grievous in the sight of Allah” (An-Noor, 24:15)

Brothers and sisters, not only should you not backbite, but you also have a responsibility that when someone comes to you backbiting a brother or a sister, you have a duty to put an end to this, for your sake and for the sake of your brother or sister who is indulging in backbiting. Should you decide not to, you become part of the sin. So now let us imagine the effect the backbiter is having on our society. By backbiting, he or she is harming themselves gravely. By you listening to them and not putting a stop to it, they have harmed you. When someone phones you to backbite to you, they have willingly put you in harm’s way and you should respond. If you decide not to, you have allowed the backbiting to continue and you have had a hand in undermining the community. Backbiting is a lose-lose-lose situation, no one wins except shaitan.

In his farewell address, the Prophet(SAAWS) said: “Your blood, your property and your honour are sacred to you like the sacredness of this day in this place in this month.” (*Saheeh*

Bukhari (1741) and *Saheeh Muslim* (1679))

Ibn al-Munzir makes the following observation: “The Prophet(SAAWS) has prohibited backbiting in his farewell address to his followers, linking its prohibition to the prohibition of transgressing against another’s life or property. Then the Prophet(SAAWS) emphasized how prohibited all this is by declaring its prohibition to be as the sacredness of the sacred day of Hajj, the sacred land of Arafat and the sacred month of Zul-Hijja.”

The Prophet(SAAWS) said: “One of the greatest of the major sins is to stretch out one’s tongue without right against the honour of a Muslim.” (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (4877))

A’isha(RAA) relates that she said to the Prophet(SAAWS): “It should tell you enough about Safiyyah that she is short.” To this the Prophet(SAAWS) replied: “You have said a word that if it was to be mixed with the water of the sea, it would contaminate it.” (*Sunan al-Tirmizi* (2502) and *Sunan Abu Dawud* (4875))

Scholars commented: “The word referred to is that of backbiting, if it were something that could be mixed with the water of the sea, it would noticeably contaminate it in spite of the vast and copious amount of water that the sea contains. How then is it going to be when it is mixed with our good deeds? Are our good deeds as big as the sea?”

Brothers and sisters, when we have all this evidence in Islam of the significance of this act, why do Muslims continue to indulge in such a matter? Why do Muslim men and women find it so easy to pick up the phone and say: guess what, have you heard about you know who? Why is it that when we are with some company, it is very easy for us to start talking about others not realising that we have just started to backbite. Why is it that we find it easy to talk about a brother or sister in Islam without due consideration to what we are actually doing to ourselves, never mind to our Muslim community. Brothers and sisters, backbiting is one of the most hideous of major sins because it eats away at our “Deen” and it eats away at our community.

Al-Hasan al-Basri said: “I swear by Allah, backbiting is swifter in consuming the religion of a Muslim than a gangrenous infection is in consuming the human body.”

Allah(SWT) guides us and tell us that shaitan is waiting for us to backbite so that he can sow the seeds of hatred amongst ourselves:

وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا

“And say to My servants that they should only say that which is best, for satan does sow dissensions among them, for satan is to man an avowed enemy” (Al-Isra’, 17:53)

Brothers and sisters, I remind myself first before anyone else about this devastating habit. It is devastating to the person and to the community. Unfortunately, backbiting and slandering have become very widespread in most communities, and the Muslim community is no exception. But Islam has guided us to recognise the ills of what we are doing and how to set ourselves back on the straight path.

In getting back on the straight path, one of the first things we need to do is to recognise what are the reasons that make people backbite, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. When we look at it closely, and when we exclude ignorance, we come to a sad conclusion that the main reasons why one would backbite another are jealousy, envy, anger and hatred. All of these are diseases of the heart that are already eating away at their owner and a manifestation of weakness of faith. It is vital for the brother and sister who are more than willing to backbite to carefully look inwards at themselves and ask the question; why am I doing this? What is wrong with me? What will I gain by backbiting? But most seriously, what am I losing by backbiting?

Other reasons for indulging in backbiting are keeping bad company of people who find backbiting very easy. If you keep to such company, inevitably and with time you will start to indulge in the same. Brothers and sisters, if you are in company of people that backbite, give them advice and help them to give it up. Should they chose not to do so, you need to look very carefully at such company. If the Muslim who is backbiting only knows what they are doing in the sight of Allah(SWT), that hopefully should be enough for them to help them stop. The Prophet(SAAWS) said: “A man might speak a word without thinking about its implications, but because of it, he will plunge into the Hellfire further than the distance between the east and west.” (Bukhari & Muslim)

Can we imagine this brothers and sisters? One of us utters a word in backbiting and it plunges the brother or sister into clear and evident loss. And what could be a greater loss than for a person to say something that does nothing for him but rob him of the blessings and the rewards for his good deeds? And once the good deeds run out, the sins of the victim are hurled upon him until he is hurled by them into Hell. This is how serious the matter is and yet we take it lightly:

وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّئًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ

“And you thought it to be a light matter, while it was most grievous in the sight of Allah”
(An-Noor, 24:15)

A Muslim utters a mere word upon his tongue thoughtlessly, without any consideration, and without thinking that he will be taken to task for it. So what about when the Muslim on purpose goes around backbiting his brother wilfully.

Once Mu`az bin Jabal asked the Prophet(SAAWS) to inform him of some good work that would admit him into Paradise and distance him from Hellfire. The Prophet(SAAWS) mentioned to him the virtues of many good deeds, and then said: “Shall I inform you of the foundation of all of that?”

Mu`az said: “Certainly.”

The Prophet(SAAWS) took hold of his tongue and said: “Restrain yourself from this.”

Mu`az asked: “O Prophet of Allah! Are we held to task for the things that we say?”

The Prophet(SAAWS) replied: “O Mu`az! Does anything topple people headlong into Hellfire other than the harvest of their tongues?” (Sunan At-Tirmizi and Sunan Ibn Majah)

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَ لَكُمْ

2nd Khutbah:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ثُمَّ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ . الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَرِّهِ
أَنْفُسِنَا وَسَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا . أَمَا بَعْدُ :

Brothers and sisters, let us remember the words of the Prophet(SAAWS):

“Does anything topple people headlong into Hellfire other than the harvest of their tongues?”

So what should we do when we come across backbiting:

وَلَوْ نَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ فَلْتُمْ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ بِهِذَا سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ

“And why did you not, when you heard it, say; It is not right of us to speak of this: Glory to You (Allah), this is a most serious slander” (An-Noor, 24:16)

Beautiful words; “and why not when you heard it, say; it is not right of us to speak of this”. When we come across backbiting, there is only one thing to do, stop the person from speaking and if they refuse to stop, then stop yourself from listening. But most important, if you could not stop from listening never pass on what you have listened to.

Al-Hasan al-Basri said: “Backbiting has three manifestations; backbiting, tale-telling, and slander. Backbiting, is to say about your brother something that is true about him. Tale-telling is to say something that you have heard about him, and slander is to say about him what is not true.”

Now for the things that we are permitted to say: Some situations allow us to inform others of what someone has done. It is allowed for us to inform the authorities when someone does injustice to us or to others. It is allowed for us to inform someone in authority who can help stop a perpetrator from committing further vice. It is also permissible for us to tell the person who seeks our advice legitimately on a person for business dealings or marriage. In this case it is not appropriate for us to hide what we know about the person so that the enquirer will not potentially be deceived. In such a case, we are permitted to speak within the remit of the question and for legitimate reasons only. The person receiving the information has been entrusted with it and is not permitted to pass it on.

How can we help protect ourselves from such a major sin. One of the ways to protect ourselves from speaking ill of others is by cultivating our fear of Allah and our sense of shame before of our Lord. We do that by reflecting often upon the verses of the Quran and the hadeeth of our Prophet(SAAWS) and recognising that we will all be brought back to Him and we will be judged for all that we did and all that we have said.

أَمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّا لَا نَسْمَعُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ بَلَىٰ أُرْسِلْنَا لِذِيهِمْ يَكْتُبُونَ

Allah says: “Or do they think that We do not hear their secrets and their private counsels? Indeed we do and our messengers are by them recording” (Az-Zukhruf, 43: 80)

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا نُوسِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ
(١٦) إِذْ يَتَلَقَى الْمُتَلَقِينَ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشَّمَالِ فَعَيْدٌ (١٧) مَا يَلْقَظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا
لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

“We verily created man and We know what his soul whispers to him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. When the two Receivers receive (him), seated on the right hand and on the left. He utters no word but there is with him an observer ready (to record it)” (Qaaf, 50:16-8)

The Prophet(SAAWS) said: “Feel shame before Allah as you ought to feel shame before him. So guard the head and what it contains, guard the stomach and what you put in it, and think upon death and returning to dust.” (*Sunan al-Tirmizi* (2458))

Rasul bin Wahab said: “I swore an oath that for every time I backbite someone, I would fast a day. This just wore me out, since I would backbite and fast. Then I resolved that for every time I backbite someone, I would spend one silver coin in charity. Then, for the love of money, I gave up backbiting.”

Like everything else, to get rid of a bad habit, one needs to recognise it for what it is, needs to develop a good habit to take over and needs to set himself or herself the right atmosphere for that. We know how sinful backbiting is. We know what the way back to Allah(SWT) involves and we should know what company to keep. I ask Allah to guide us to protect ourselves from the evilness within our selves and from our own bad deeds.