

The Eighth Talk

1. Cultivating The Habit Of Sin

The things that become the cause of departure of Allah's blessings from a person or a household are the sins that are perpetrated within in. There are many types of sins. Sins are categorized into major and minor. But this categorization is not the subject of discussion here. Sins are also categorized into 'permanent' and 'temporary' sins. Sometimes a person commits a sin, for example, he tells a lie. This is a forbidden act and he must repent and make efforts not to repeat it. On repenting, it goes into the category of temporary sins. But if the person becomes a compulsive liar and keeps telling lies again and again, he renders himself a permanent sinner. If a person always talks ill of others, regularly gossips, is always finding faults in others and is a habitual oppressor – this type of sinning is so dangerous that the Holy Quran says:

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَقِبَةً لِّلَّذِينَ أَسْوَأُوا السُّوءَيْ أَنْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَ كَانُوا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ

Then evil was the consequence to those who dealt in evil because they denied the revelations of Allah and made a mock of them. (Sura ar-Rum, 30: 10)

Those who commit sins as a habit must beware and forsake this habit. These sinners come to such a pass that they start ridiculing the *Ulama*, the *minbar* and the *mehrab*! They even start denying the verses of the Holy Book!

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) says that when a person commits a sin, a black spot appears in his heart. If the person repents, this black spot disappears. But if he continues sinning, unrepentant, then the black spot starts spreading, and the darkness of sins surrounds the whole heart, which can never be rectified. As good Muslims we must all try to refrain from sinning. Due to our fallible nature, if we commit a sin then immediate repentance is the only remedy, along with the determination not to repeat the act again.

There is another category of sins: When a man commits sins, he should realize that he is committing a great wrong. For example when a man looks at a *namahram* female, he should experience an

uneasiness within himself. If he tells a lie or backbites, he should also realize that he is committing a great wrong. Sometimes this realization that he is committing a great offense also goes away. This happens when a person sins repeatedly. When a person commits sins again and again, the instinct that reminds him that he is sinning becomes dormant thus rendering him a perpetual sinner. When this feeling is lost, it is worst than repeating sins, because at this stage the chances of repentance and reform remain very slim.

2. Abandoning The Veil Is A Moral Exhibitionism

Once at a marriage party a lady came dressed improperly. She knew that this was a wrong thing to do. Later, if she regrets her action, repents cries out to her Lord, and tries to mend her ways, then it is good. But if she continues with this improper style of dressing, it will, slowly, become her habit. In all respects she is a decent person. It upsets her to even hear about sexual deviations. If she hears that someone has committed adultery, she criticizes them and acknowledges it as a great wrong. But this improperly dressed lady herself is committing a greater offence. When she applies makeup, wears sleeveless blouses and transparent stockings, and then goes to shops, without hijab, talks and laughs, her act is worse than committing adultery. The reason for this is she has been shameless, which is a sin bigger than adultery itself. The Holy Quran says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشْيَعَ الْفَحْشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

Lo! Those who love that slander should be spread concerning those who believe, theirs will be a painful punishment in the world and the Hereafter... (Sura An-Nur, 24 : 19)

Those who adopt such shameless and uncouth ways and promote such habits, for example, a youth taking pleasure in staring at *namahram* young girls, or a repair-man on a house visit, talks to the ladies of the house, who in turn joke and laugh with him. The Quran says that such shameless friendliness invites double punishment. This is sin more serious than committing adultery. The Holy Quran says in this regard:

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَاماً

..... and whoso doth this shall pay the penalty. (Sura al- Furqan, 25: 68)

A person who presents himself for adultery, or does the act, will, in both situations, qualify himself to go to the Hell, and remain there permanently. He will not only go to the Hell but will get the most horrible treatment therein. It is said in the traditions that the person who offers himself for adultery, or perpetrates the act in this world will have such stench emanating from his private part that the other inhabitants of the Hell will get disturbed. But the sin of shamelessness is an even bigger sin. Women who don't cover

their heads in public, wear half-sleeve blouses, transparent stockings and then walk in the streets in full view of *namahram* men, or travel by public transport tempt others to emulate them. These women not only adopt sinful ways, but set a bad example for others to follow. She goes shopping and the shopkeeper instead of advising her appropriately, talks to her. Sometimes we find that a woman is chaste and upright, but she does not realize the gravity of her sin. Coming in front of *namahram* and talking to them is something very normal for her. She converses freely with her husband's elder and younger brothers, she exposes her arms and hair in their presence. She must mend her ways and express repentance over such acts of the past. What is very regrettable is that we become oblivious of the fact that we have adopted sinful ways. We even fail to realize that we are doing something wrong. I very fervently appeal to the ladies that they should avoid unnecessarily going to the *bazaar* and the malls. If they have to go out, then they should be properly dressed and covered.

Amir al Mu'minin (a.s.) says that a time will come for the followers of the Prophet (s) that women will wear transparent stockings and roam about on the streets. He further said that when such things happen, it will be the period of intrigue and turmoil. Such women will be consigned to Hell, where they will remain for eternity. They will face retribution there for thousands of years. The women, therefore, should take special care of their dress. If they wish to wear flimsy stockings, they should fold them twice to ensure that their limbs are not exposed to strange eyes. If the sleeves of their blouse are short, they should ensure to change into a proper garment while going out or else cover their arms properly. When a lady goes to a shop, and pays the shopkeeper, she should not forget that she is a *namahram* for him. If she has to talk to the shopkeeper she should not prolong the conversation, but keep it to the point.

3. The Second Trait

A second, and positive, trait of a good lady is that she remains aloof in the presence of *namahram* males. When she talks to them, she gives short answers. Laughing and joking in front of *namahram* is a sin. The late Kulaini writes a back-breaking narrative in *al-Kaafi* that Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) said if a woman narrates a lewd joke to a strange man, as a retribution for the act, she will be consigned to the Hell for one hundred years! Businessmen should be careful. If their wealth that comes from such sources is spent in their home, their homes cannot be blessed abodes.

4. To Make Excuses For Sin

A person commits a sin, accepts that he has sinned, but then tries to condone it by making some excuse. This is a very dangerous situation. Some women expose their faces in public places and wear improper dresses and then condone it by saying this is progressiveness and liberation. In the name of modernity, some people converse freely and joke with *namahram* women and backbite. Some men create dissensions in the society through gossip and falsehood terming it as political expedient. Such irresponsible acts fall in the category of *gheebah* (backbiting) and will attract acute retribution.

Therefore I appeal to you that there should be no sins in your life. A sin whether big or small brings about degradation for man. The second appeal I make to you is that dread of sinning should never leave your heart. Even after due care, if one commits a sin, he should not try to condone it. If the fear of sin is not there in the heart of a person and he falls into the habit of making excuses for and condoning such acts, then he can never be repentant in his life. He renders himself a compulsive sinner. Such persons can never hope to get the intercession of the Ahl al Bayt on the Day of Judgment!

I would like to draw the attention to another thing that is seen in every household. It is to be found amongst the businessmen as well as the laborers, the educated and the illiterate, the revolutionary and the non-revolutionary. The dread of this sin has left our hearts and we even make excuses for it. Even if we shed tears of blood over this problem it will not be enough of repentance. This is the bad habit of backbiting and slandering. Similarly people indulge in sins like listening to music and songs; seeing passionate videos and pornographic films etc. one can only pity the homes where there is music and lewd things. It is not I who is using this word pity but it is the word used by Imam Jafar al Sadiq (a.s.). A person came to the Imam (a.s.) and said, "O son of the Prophet (s)! There is no music in my house, or dance! But my neighbor has employed a dancing girl who dances and sings. When I go to my toilet, I listen to her singing for a while! What effect it will have on me?" The Imam (a.s.) replied, "Pity on you! Go and have a *ghusl* (bath) of repentance! Offer a prayer and then repent" Then Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) added, "Music and dance is not compatible with our *Shia* households!"

Definitely amoral films, music and dance are not compatible with our households! The children, who are raised in homes where these things are common, can only be pitied! As said by the Prophet (s) Satans live in such homes and these are devoid of Allah's blessings and the presence of the angels!

5. Backbiting And Slander

I am mentioning two things with a lot of regret. There are very few homes where backbiting and slander, spreading of rumors and lies don't exist. These are major sins. The consequences of these habits, according to the Holy Quran, are very serious.

وَيْلٌ لِكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُمَزَةٍ

Woe to every scandal-monger and slanderer. (Sura Humaza, 104: 1)

Woe be to the person who searches for faults of people in front of them. For example, a wife has prepared the food that the husband has not liked. In such an event, he starts ridiculing the wife. Or when a husband buys something and brings it home and the wife doesn't approve of it, she starts criticizing it severely. The Holy Quran disapproves of such persons. They should know that they will be consigned to the Hell where not only their skins, but their very bones will burn! The same goes for *gheebah*. Backbiting is tantamount to eating a *mu'min* brother's flesh. Do not backbite. Backbiting is like eating the

flesh of dead animals. There can be no felicity, no piety and no mercy of Allah in homes where carrion is eaten and where dogs are raised.

There is a tradition quoted from Imam Husayn (a.s.) which is also quoted in *Tohaf al Uqool* from Imam Zain al Abedeen (a.s.):

Backbiting is the food of the dogs of Hell

The meaning of this saying of the Imam (a.s.) is that a person, who backbites again and again, becomes a habitual backbiter. The backbiter goes to the Hell in the form of a dog. When these dogs become hungry, according to Imam Husayn (a.s.) and Imam Sajjad (a.s.), they are fed with the backbiting they had done in the world in the form of rotten, foul smelling, putrefied flesh! It is a pity, that in most of our homes, people indulge in backbiting. Which is the home where people don't ridicule their friends behind their backs?!

O ladies! Don't be harsh while dealing with your children. Be especially mindful about respecting the children. If, their feelings are hurt and they start speaking ill of you behind your back, the fear of the sin of *gheebah* will leave their hearts, and they will fall into the habit of sinning. Then, they forget the norms of decency and turn into beasts. Slander is falsely attributing something to a person, behind his back. The difference between backbiting and slander is that in the case of the former, one takes pleasure in recounting the person's failing behind his back. In the case of the latter, the slanderer concocts false stories about the person in his absence.

It is observed in our society that when a person is backbiting, and someone forbids him to do so, the backbiter retorts that the person about whom he is backbiting does in fact have this shortcoming. This is a satanic talk. If a person does indeed have the fault about which you are talking in his absence, it is backbiting. If you backbite you will be turned into a dog. If there is no fault in a person that you attribute to him, then it is downright slander. Do you know about the retribution for these sins?

إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاَيَّتِ اللَّهِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَذِّابُونَ

Only they invent falsehoods who believe not Allah's revelations, and (only) they are the liars.

(Sura al Nahl, 16: 105)

The Holy Quran asserts that those who blame each other falsely are not Muslims. They are downright liars.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a.s.) says that those who practice slander will be stationed in putrid pools of their own blood. They will stand in there for fifty thousand years, till everyone has given their accounts. Then in a state of humiliation, these people will be taken to Hell. I regret to say here, that most of our homes are the abodes of slanderers. The angels see your house in its true form. You cannot see it, but they

can see that your house is full of filth and blood. With our limited vision we are unable to see this awful state of affairs! The angels don't even want to look at your home, because your house is overflowing with blood. When did this happen? When the inhabitants of the house did not repent to undo the damage. The filth and blood of *Qiyamah* is prepared in this world. When you were backbiting in the world, it gave rise to this filth. On the day of *Qiyamah* you will have to stand on this very filth. The vision of people will be very sharp on the Day of Judgment. They will be able to clearly see the filth and gore surrounding them! We should take utmost care to see that we don't attribute anything to a person without making sure of the truth in the matter. Is there anyone in our midst who can say with confidence that he neither listens to any talk about any person without positive proof nor does he say anything about a person unless he is sure of the veracity of what he says! We are such people that even while fasting we indulge in slanderous gossip! Even if we shed tears of blood over this heinous habit, it won't be sufficient! The Holy Quran says: Pity the person who spreads false rumours. Pay attention to this sin, it is indeed a great sin. The Quran says:

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَاهُ بِالْأَسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ يَأْفُوا هِكُمْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسِبُونَهُ هَيْئَنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ

When you received it with your tongues and spoke with your mouths what you had no knowledge of, and you deemed it an easy matter while with Allah it was grevious. (Sura An-Nur, 24 : 15)

The Quran says that what you speak, and has become a habit for you, is considered an easy matter and you attach no importance to it, but remember that Allah attaches great importance to it.

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُوْلَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْؤُلًا

And pursue thou not that which thou hast not the knowledge of: Verily, the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these shall be questioned about it. (Sura al-'Isra', 17: 36)

Don't go after things about which you don't have absolute knowledge. Allah will question your hearts, eyes and ears about what you thought, heard and saw. The Quran tells us not to follow doubts. When you hear about something accept it only in the presence of proof. If you want to say something you must not say it unless you have evidence, failing which, be assured that your heart, your tongue, your ears will give evidence against you.

الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشَهِّدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

This Day We seal up mouths, and hands speak out and feet bear witness as to what they used to earn. (Sura Ya Sin, 36: 65)

On the Day of Judgment a seal will be put on the mouths. The ears and the tongues of people will bear witness against them for their misdeeds, and say that they had heard *gheebah*, they had uttered and accepted slander and they used to spread false rumours. Think about what you are doing in this world. The husbands have to be truthful with their wives and the wives too should be honest with the husbands. One should never resort to lies. If the chain of lies takes root in a house, then angels will abandon the place. Angels don't enter such houses instead they curse them. It is narrated in the traditions that if a person utters one falsehood, immediately a foul smell emanates from his mouth and goes towards the Firmament and the angels start cursing him. Wives should never utter a lie to their husbands and similarly the husbands should always tell the truth to the wives. More important is that they should never resort to lying in front of the impressionable children. If parents make any promise to the children, they should ensure its fulfillment. Do not make false promises to the children. If you want to be a real Muslim, you should be truthful. Pity on the home where there exists hypocrisy, where the husband lies to his wife, and the wife lies to the husband. This house gives out a stench like that of a garbage dump. When the angels look at such homes, they curse these homes, they curse these couples and say: You are Muslims and yet you lie?

The Holy Quran says that Muslims must refrain from two things. One is that they should avoid idol worship and the second is to avoid telling lies. This means that the Holy Book places the heinous acts of idol worship on par with lying! Despite this, lying and falsehood is rampant in our homes! Our society is engulfed with this curse. A settlement where people are habitual liars sends out a foul stench towards the firmament and the angels curse such a place!

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