Ramadan Lesson 8: Backbiting

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(May Allah protect him)

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I seek refuge in Allah from Satan, the accursed:
0 you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was for those before you, that you may attain Taqwa. [They are] prescribed number of days."

All praise be to Allah, may good, pure and blessed praises. I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship but Allah, alone, without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

My dear brothers, we will discuss a disease. This is a disease that afflicts both righteous and reformers, both men and women, the educated and uneducated, and the young and the old. This disease accompanies people wherever they go, maybe even into the houses of Allah Most High. It may be with them while they are offering an obligatory act of worship such as Hajj, a pillar of this religion. You may find them afflicted with this disease while they are fasting Ramadan, another pillar of Islam. We find this disease is a plague which has afflicted most Muslims, except those upon whom Allah has had mercy. What is this disease?

Indeed it is the disease of backbiting. What is backbiting? Backbiting, as related by Imam Muslim in his Saheeh, that the Messenger () said to his companions, "Do you know what backbiting is?" They replied, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He explained to them, "Backbiting is that you mention about your brother something which he would not like." It is to mention something about your Muslim brother which he would not like to hear. They said, "0 Messenger of Allah, if what we say about him is true?" It is present. What you say about him is true, for example. He said, if this trait actually exists, of course. He () said, "You have backbitten him. And if it is not true then you have slandered him." This is the hadeeth narrated by Muslim.

Many people take the matter of backbiting very lightly, thinking it to be a simple matter. We will pray Dhuhr or Asr and the matter is finished. We make wudoo and its over. No my dear brothers. Are you aware that backbiting is from the greater sins? It's not from the lesser sins. The greater sins, as the scholars have stated, are not forgiven through prayer and fasting according to many scholars. One must repent to Allah Most High from it. A person must turn to Allah and seek his forgiveness; he must regret what he has done and resolve never to repeat it. To mention about your brother something which he would not like to hear. We shall give some practical examples, because some people take this matter lightly, he says, "Brother this is not backbiting." For example, you mention your brother Muslim, and say, "So-and-so is stingy." This is backbiting, due to this principle given to us by Allah's Messenger (*): to say about your brother something he would not like to hear. So anything you say, which when it is heard by your Muslim brother and he is bothered, pained and hurt by it, you can regard it as backbiting. So you say: so-and-so is - we mentioned stingy - so-and-so is a coward. This is backbiting. So-and-so sleeps too much - backbiting. So-and-so can't take a joke - backbiting. So-and-so eats a lot - backbiting. So-and-so is heavy blooded - backbiting. So-and-so did not teach his children how to behave - backbiting. So-and-so did not teach his wife good behavior - backbiting. Someone says to you, "Forget about him." Look at this derogatory manner. So-and-so doesn't know what he's talking about. This is backbiting because he is saying it in a derogatory manner.
Some scholars mentioned something peculiar. They said that some people backbite in the form of supplication! You ask someone, "How is so-and-so?" They reply, "Him? We ask Allah safety and well-being!" Some scholars have said that this is backbiting. They said this is backbiting, why? Because people have understood that there is a question mark about him.

Some people even say, "How is so-and-so?" They say, "By Allah brother leave his matter. We don't want to backbite." The scholars have said this is backbiting. We don't want to backbite, meaning that we don't want to backbite this person. This is backbiting. Or, "We ask Allah safety and well-being." Someone is mentioned and another says, "We ask Allah safety and well-being." They said this is backbiting.

not. Leave it brother! Did the Prophet () not say, "Leave what causes doubt and stick to that which does not?" This is what he said. I have even read from some scholars who have said that if you say so-and-so is miskeen (helpless), it is backbiting, because he does not want other to say this about him. So-and-so is a dervish. So-and-so is simple.

We must be careful from all these words my dear brothers so that we don't backbite. Thus, when the Prophet (mi) was taken to the heavens in the Miraj, he saw some people... some people ask what the punishment of backbiting is. We say that backbiting is from the greater sins. He said. "The Prophet () saw people with fingernails of lead..." imagine... "scraping their faces and chests." The Prophet (t) asked Jibreel who they are, and what their crime was, and what they did, to which he replied: "These people ate the flesh of others and desecrated their honor." This is the punishment of those who backbite: they will have fingernails of lead with which they will scrape their faces and chests. There is no might nor punishment except by Allah!

"Do any of you wish,"
Look at this example, this abhorring example. Allah Almighty likened the backbiter, "Do any of you wish to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it?"
Imagine, your brother is dead and you are eating his flesh! How abhorring! Also it is as if this backbiter - we ask Allah safety and well-being, is eating the flesh of his dead brother.

Be very careful about those gatherings where people are backbiting. Some people may not have that strong of a personality to speak about against backbiting, and this is a problem we face. Another problem is that we hear people backbiting, yet we appease those present in the gathering. We don't want those present to become upset at us, so you find them keeping silent... once, twice or thrice, until they find nothing wrong with it any longer, until this disease takes root in his system, until its over... it becomes something normal; he hears people backbiting and has no problem with it.

Thus my dear brothers, be very careful from gatherings in which people are backbiting. Do you know of a gathering in which there is always backbiting? Those of women. I warn women from this because this trait, we ask Allah safety and well-being, may be more common amongst women than men. So-and-so was divorced, so-and-so did this or that, so-and-so is like this or that. Women always mention the news of others in their gatherings, and thus they are more prone to backbiting than others.

Thus we severely warn against this dangerous and deadly disease which eat away a person's good deeds. On the Day of Judgement, the person you backbit will come and take from your good deeds if you don't repent to Allah. For this reason, Imam Ibn-ul-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, mentioned a wondrous point of benefit. He said, you find some people, this is a paraphrase of what he said in his book The Disease and the Cure; he said: you will find a
religious person who is an ascetic and a fervent worshipper, avoiding much of the forbidden vile sins, from fornication, from theft and from unlawful wealth, but he does not take caution froth backbiting.

He cannot control his tongue, so you find him, and refuge is sought from Allah, rambling, desecrating people's honor, both living and dead. You my find this amongst righteous worshippers, as I mentioned, who leave other greater sins, but when it comes to backbiting, which is from the greater sins, he cannot leave it. It has taken root in his system and become part of his personality. He has to mention people in every gathering. This is a disease... that one becomes accustomed to mentioning people's faults and seeking out their mistakes. This is a disease. A person must resist himself. It takes resistance for a person to control his tongue so that he doesn't talk about others, except, between parenthesis in the conclusion of this lesson, if there is some interest served or some need.

We do not wish to widen this issue more than needed. Sometimes there is some need or some interest served. Yes. For example, I am warning others about an evil person. Yes. Like a person who is asked about another in regards to marriage. What do you think about so-and-so? Yes, so-and-so... he seeks to marry your sister or your daughter for example. You say, we know this and that about this person. Yes, this is due to some need or interest. As for other reasons, then it is impermissible to mention people's faults.

This is what I had to say, and I seek forgiveness for myself and you.

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