

Ramadan Lesson 7: Envy

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(May Allah protect him)

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I seek refuge in Allah from Satan, the accursed: O 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, there is a disease that has spread amongst many of the righteous and the reformers, among women and men, among the elder and the youth, and among educated and uneducated. This disease is counted amongst the major sins. It is the disease of envy. What is envy? Envy, as Imam Nawawi, may Allah the Almighty have mercy on him, said in "Riyad al-Saliheen", is when one wishes a blessing to be removed from somebody else. That is, you wish that your Muslim brother loses some blessing, be it a religious blessing or a worldly one. Allah Almighty stated in His Noble Book that among the traits of the Jews is that they envy people for what Allah bestowed on them of His blessings. This is one of the attributes of the Jews, pay attention to this matter. Imagine, the first sin with which Allah Almighty was disobeyed is envy, when Iblis envied Adam. How can I, Iblis, bow to Adam?! The first sin that was committed in [human] existence is that of envy.

The Prophet (*) said as advice: "Do not envy one another, do not hate one another, do not break relations from one another, do not turn your backs on one another," then what did he say? "But rather be Slaves of Allah and Brothers."

Allah Most High mentioned some traits of the Believers in the Quran:

And leave not, in our hearts, ghil against those who have believed.

"Ghil," meaning envy or hatred against those who believe. Envy is harmful in many ways. First, envy contains rejection of the Decree of Allah Most High. Are you aware that this envious person rejects the will of Allah? That is, he, may Allah give us refuge, accuses Allah for His judgment. How can You bless so-and-so and not bless me? How can You give so-and-so and not give me? That is, he accuses the Justice and Decree of Allah Most High. We know that Allah Most High is the Most Just, the Most Wise, the Most Merciful, who only puts things in their proper places. One Names of Allah Most High is The Wise. What is the meaning of The Wise? The Wise is One who puts things where they belong.

Also among the harms of envy is that you always find the envier upset, worried, and grouchy. Anytime he sees a person who has been granted a blessing by Allah, be it religious or worldly, you find him, Subhallah, in a crisis, distraught, to the point that envy even shows, Subhanallah, on some people's faces. He hears, for example, that so-and-so was blessed with a lot of money, or so-and-so was gifted a car, or so-and-so got married to a righteous and beautiful woman.

Subhanallah, you see on the face of this envious person, who hates that the blessings of Allah be given to others... You find, Subhanallah, that his faces changes. His face starts changing colors. You see, Subhanallah, envy in his eyes and his face. He does not rejoice when his brothers rejoice, and he is not saddened by the grief of his brothers. The Prophet (t) described the perfect believer as having the following trait: "None of you is a believer until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself " So no matter what you do, no matter how much knowledge, fiqh, worship, obedience, memorized Quran, night prayer, or fasting you have, you have a problem in your heart, which is that you do not wish for your brothers what you wish for yourself If you do not wish well for them, we say you have not achieved full faith. Your faith is lacking. But I worship at night and fast during day, I memorized the Quran and I memorized Hadiths! I am an Imam, I give Khutbahs, and I am famous! We say no matter how many good deeds you have, you do not wish for your Muslim brothers what you wish for yourself, or you do not dislike for your Muslim brothers what you dislike for yourself, in the scale of Sharia, you are still lacking in faith.

That is why my dear brothers you have to resist yourself So you find that you wish for Allah's blessing, be it religious or worldly, to be taken from so-and-so, what you do is you resist yourself, you pray to Allah Most High: "O Allah grant success to so-and-so, O Allah bless his provisions." You hear, for example, about your Muslim brother that Allah blessed him with a house, a wife, a job, or a good salary. He received some money. He memorized the Quran. You pray to Allah, O Allah grant him success in his blessings! O Allah bless his provisions! Here begins a battle between you, your self, and Satan, so that you prove to Allah, O Lord! I fight myself so that my heart becomes pure. Subhanallah my dear brothers! Every person whose heart is attached to the world... listen to this golden rule. Every person whose heart is attached to the world, Subhanallah you find him sad and upset. As for the person who does not care about the world, an ascetic, as Imam al-Qayyim said, "Asceticism is the comfort of the heart and the body." A person whose heart is attached to the afterlife does not pay attention to these trivial matters. Instead, he congratulates people and wishes them success in their business and those who obtained higher degrees. Allah grant you success! Allah bless you! Try to pray for him. Resist yourself, you understand? So one has to resist himself to prove to Allah, "O Lord, I am trying to resist myself " So I say, my dear brothers, this disease of envy is prevalent, as Imam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on him, said: "No body is free of envy, but the noble hide it whereas the base show it."

There are many types of envy. For example a woman may have problems with her husband. I told you this problem is very prevalent among women. For example, a woman goes to visit another woman and found her home to be beautiful with brand new furniture. Then, a few days later, she hears the house burnt down. She feels relieved. We say this is what envy is! When you hear that a Muslim has faced a setback, some calamity, disease, or crisis, and you feel relief, we say this is envy. And when you hear that Allah Most High has blessed a Muslim brother and that He granted him success in his religious and worldly affairs, and you grieve and become depressed, we say this is envy.

So we must be watchful over our hearts. You have to call very strict account of your heart. Look at your hearts! Is there any envy there? You must always pray to Allah. O Allah, purify my heart of diseases, of envy, or rancor, of hatred. I say also another practical example in the lives of women, is that you find a woman who always has problems with her husbands. When she hears that another woman, mashallah, is happily married, you find subhanallah that she feels sad and upset. Then one day if she comes and complains that she had a problem with her husband, she feels relieved, and you find subhanallah that her face changes! She feels joy! Her face and attitude changes! From their faces subhanallah you can see their joy when they hear that one of their Muslim brothers has faced a setback, a calamity, or a crises.

So let us be careful, and pay close attention to our hearts, because, as I said to you, envy is from the greater sins, and it is considered rejection of Allah's Decree and Judgement. You say how I purify my heart of envy? I say, you do that by resisting your self and that you pray for the person who you have envied. You continually pray for them, and you pray to Allah to purify your heart from envy.

I ask Allah the Generous, the Lord of the Magnificent Throne to purify our hearts of envy. This is what I had to say, and ask Allah forgiveness for me and you. And may Allah's peace, prayers, and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his companions.

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