



JUMU'AH LECTURE:

CURSING AND FOUL LANGUAGE



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَنَتَوَكَّلُ عَلَيْهِ وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يُضِلَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَنَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَنَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا وَمَوْلَانَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدَهُ وَرَسُولَهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ وَبَارَكْ وَسَلَّم تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Islam is a complete religion encompassing all aspects of human life. From the time one wakes to the time one lies to rest at night, etiquettes of eating, drinking, even dressing and appearance; the Prophet ﷺ has left us with guidance in all aspects of life. It is this noble character and mannerisms of the Prophet ﷺ that Allah ﷻ has marked as the ideal which every person should strive to emulate. Allah ﷻ said:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

And indeed, you are of a great moral character.¹

Islam is not restricted to categories of worship or wearing specific attire on auspicious days of the Islamic calendar. Islam is a complete way of life; surrendering to those dictates and submitting to its commandments is the sign of a true believer. Allah ﷻ says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Shayṭān. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.²

Whether it be our 'Aqā'id (beliefs), 'Ibādāt (acts of worship), Mu'āmalāt (business dealings), Mu'āsharāt (social interactions), or Akhlāq (character); all aspects need to conform to the law of Allah. While we understand and accept that our beliefs and worship should conform to the Qur'ān and Sunnah; it is in the other 3 categories that we most often find ourselves lacking. In particular, our social interactions and character; which, in most cases, are influenced by cultural norms and particularly in today's climate, by pop culture and western celebrities. Our hairstyles, dressing, gait, mannerisms and even speech resemble that of these celebrities. Our speech, for one, has become punctuated with the most profane language, and curses are spewed forth regularly. Never do we stop and ponder that we will be taken to task for the words that leave our lips.

Once on a journey, Sayyidunā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ asked the Prophet ﷺ, "O Messenger of Allah! Inform me about an action which will secure my admittance to Paradise and keep me far from the Fire."

The Prophet ﷺ said, "You have asked me about something great, but it is easy for whomever Allah makes it easy: Worship Allah and do not associate any partners with Him, establish Ṣalāh, give Zakāh, fast in Ramaḍān, and perform Ḥajj to the Ka'bah." Then the Prophet ﷺ said, "Shall I not guide you to the doors of good? Fasting is a shield. Charity extinguishes sins like water extinguishes fire, and a man's praying in the depths of the night."

The Prophet ﷺ added, "Shall I not inform you about the head of the entire matter, its pillar, and its hump?"

¹ Sūrah al-Qalam: 4.

² Sūrah al-Baqarah: 208.

Mu'adh رضي الله عنه said, "Of course, O Messenger of Allah!"

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "The head of the matter is Islam, its pillar is Ṣalāh, and its hump is Jihad."

Then he said, "Shall I not inform you about what governs all of that?" He grabbed his tongue and said, "Restrain this," i.e., restrain your tongue.

Mu'adh رضي الله عنه asked in surprise, "O Messenger of Allah, will we be called to account for what we say?"

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "May your mother be bereft of you, O Mu'adh! Will people be thrown in Hell on their faces or their noses for anything other than the harvest of their tongues?"¹

Once, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was praising Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah رضي الله عنها in the presence of Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها. Overcome with protective jealousy, the latter said, "Enough of Ṣafiyyah, (she is) such and such," indicating that she is short. On this small statement, this little insult, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم informed her, "You uttered such a statement, if it was mixed with the water of the ocean, it would spoil it."²

How many times have insults and obscenities been uttered by us? And how grave and extreme are those compared to the single gesture made by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, the beloved of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم? We shudder to think what damage our actions have caused to our Hereafter.

Our pious predecessors would often chastise themselves in an effort to control the tongue. Sayyidunā 'Umar رضي الله عنه once saw Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه pulling at his tongue. Astonished, 'Umar رضي الله عنه said, "Stop, may Allah forgive you." Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه explained, "This has gotten me into many problems."³

One should not only abstain from physically harming another Muslim, but should take care not to harm him with his tongue. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "A Muslim is he from whose hand and tongue the Muslims are safe."⁴

On one occasion, there was an altercation between Sayyidunā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه and one of his companions, whose mother was a non-Arab. They had a heated exchange of words, and Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه insulted the man's mother. He proceeded to complain against Sayyidunā Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه to Allah's Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Later, when Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه came to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said to him, "O Abū Dharr, you are a person who still has in you (the remnants) of the days of Ignorance."

Abū Dharr replied, "O Allah's Messenger, he who abuses (other) persons, they abuse (in return) his father and mother." He insulted me, so I insulted his mother; that's the way it is in society; it's the norm; no big deal, as we would say, trying to pass it off.

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم again said, "Abū Dharr, you are a person who still has (the remnants) of Ignorance in you." This lesson left an impression on the heart and mind of Abū Dharr رضي الله عنه and he never fell into that hole again.⁵

The importance of controlling the tongue cannot be over emphasised. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in another ḥadīth said:

1 *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, Ḥadīth: 2616.

2 *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Ḥadīth: 4875.

3 *Muwatta' Mālik*, Book 56, Ḥadīth: 12.

4 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth: 41.

5 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth: 1661.

Whoever can guarantee me to protect what is between his two jaw-bones (his tongue) and what is between his two legs (his private parts), I guarantee Paradise for him.¹

What about the foul language that has become part of our daily vocabulary? This is no small issue, it is not a minor aspect that we should not be concerned about. We should make every effort to purify our speech from such vocabulary. Just as it is Sunnah to emulate the Prophet ﷺ in his walking, sitting, eating, and drinking, so too is it Sunnah to emulate him in character and speech.

‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr رضي الله عنه narrated, “The Prophet ﷺ never spoke indecently, nor engaged himself in the use of obscene language. He used to say, ‘The best amongst you are those who have the best manners and character.’”

This emulation is not simply a matter of preference or optional; the emphasis of the Prophet ﷺ and the severe warnings in this regard make it incumbent to follow and contravening it forbidden. The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ شَرَّ النَّاسِ مَنْ تَرَكَهُ النَّاسُ أَوْ وَدَعَهُ النَّاسُ اتِّقَاءَ فُحْشِهِ

(Remember that) the worst people in Allah’s sight on the Day of Resurrection will be those whom the people desert or leave in order to save themselves from their dirty language.²

The Prophet ﷺ said:

لَيْسَ الْمُؤْمِنُ بِالطَّعَّانِ وَلَا اللَّعَّانِ وَلَا الْفَاحِشِ وَلَا الْبَذِيءِ

The believer neither slanders, nor curses others, nor indulges in obscenity, nor engages in shamelessness.³

This is the decree of Allah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرَ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّنْ نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps the latter may be better than the former; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps the latter may be better than the former. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one’s] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.⁴

One needs to realise that using foul language and cursing are sins, even when done in jest. These are characteristics of the people of Hellfire. The Prophet ﷺ, when listing the inmates of Hell, mentioned “... the miser, the liar, and those who are in the habit of abusing people and using obscene and foul language.”⁵

Insulting the ‘Ulamā’ and the Pious

When the Prophet ﷺ has laid such emphasis on protecting the tongue, abstaining from insulting others, and cursing with regards to every Muslim; how much more heinous is it to curse, belittle, and besmear the ‘Ulamā’ who the Prophet ﷺ described as:

1 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 6474.

2 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 6054.

3 Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī, Ḥadīth: 1977.

4 Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt: 11.

5 Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Ḥadīth: 2865a.

وَأَنَّ فَضْلَ الْعَالَمِ عَلَى الْعَابِدِ كَفَضْلِ الْقَمَرِ لَيْلَةَ الْبَدْرِ عَلَى سَائِرِ الْكَوَاكِبِ وَإِنَّ الْعُلَمَاءَ وَرَثَةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَإِنَّ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ لَمْ يُورَثُوا دِينَارًا وَلَا دِرْهَمًا وَرَثُوا الْعِلْمَ فَمَنْ أَخَذَهُ أَخَذَ بِحِطِّ وَافِرٍ

The superiority of the ‘Ulamā’ over the devout worshipper is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars. The ‘Ulamā’ are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets leave neither dinar nor dirham, leaving only knowledge; he who takes it takes an abundant portion.¹

Abū al-Qāsim Ibn ‘Asākir said, “Know, my brother—may Allah guide us and you to His pleasure, and make us from those who fear Him and are dutiful to Him as He deserves—that the flesh of the scholars, may Allah be merciful with them, is poison [i.e. deadly to consume through backbiting]. And Allah’s established way of tearing down the screen of those who attack the scholars is well-known. That is because attacking them for an affair that they are innocent of is a mighty thing, and to speak of their honour with falsehood and fabrications is an evil and noxious pasture to graze upon!”²

Verily, the pious are the friends of Allah, as the Prophet ﷺ has said:

Allah announced, “I will declare war against the one who shows hostility to a friend of Mine.”³

What then about speaking ill, ridiculing, and cursing those who are the best of people to walk this earth after the Ambiyā’, those regarding whom Allah ﷻ has said, “Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah”? It is heartbreaking indeed to find many self-styled scholars, modernists, orientalist, and Shī’ah and their ilk abusing the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ with the filthiest and most vile language imaginable. The Prophet ﷺ said:

اللَّهُ اللَّهُ فِي أَصْحَابِي اللَّهُ اللَّهُ فِي أَصْحَابِي لَا تَتَّخِذُوهُمْ غَرَضًا بَعْدِي فَمَنْ أَحَبَّهُمْ فَبِحُبِّي أَحَبَّهُمْ وَمَنْ أَبْغَضَهُمْ فَبِبُغْضِي أَبْغَضَهُمْ وَمَنْ آذَاهُمْ فَقَدْ آذَانِي وَمَنْ آذَانِي فَقَدْ آذَى اللَّهَ وَمَنْ آذَى اللَّهَ فَيُوشِكُ أَنْ يَأْخُذَهُ

(Fear) Allah! (Fear) Allah regarding my Companions! (Fear) Allah! (Fear) Allah regarding my Companions! Do not make them objects of insults after me. Whoever loves them, it is out of love for me that he loves them. And whoever hates them, it is out of hatred for me that he hates them. Whoever harms them, has harmed me, and whoever harms me, has offended Allah, and whoever offends Allah, [then] he shall soon be punished.⁴

Bāqir al-Majlisī, chief scholar of Safavid Iran and author of one of the eight canonical works of the Shī’ah, writes in his book, *Tadhkirat al-A’immah*:

And the religion of Shi’ism became concealed and people started following the three dogs (referring to Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān) and Mu’āwiyah, curses be upon them.⁵

May Allah ﷻ save us from ever uttering such blasphemy. Such demeaning words and filthy language are common among the Shī’ah when referring to the illustrious Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. By doing so, they bring nothing but disgrace and destruction upon themselves. May Allah ﷻ protect us.

Someone once asked al-Imām al-Nawawī رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ, “What should be done with a person who calls a Muslim a dog, pig, or another offensive word? Is it a sin?”

1 Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Ḥadīth: 3641.

2 Tabyīn Kidhb al-Muftarī, pg. 29.

3 Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 6502.

4 Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhī, Ḥadīth: 3862.

5 Tadhkirat al-A’immah, pg. 104.

Al-Imām al-Nawawī said, “It is a sin and he should be punished (by the Qāḍī) and he should repent.”¹

Conclusion

We learn the importance of holding our tongues and refraining from insulting, cursing, and ridiculing others. It is highly possible that we will face situations where we are being wronged; the way of the believer is to clarify and not resort to insults and expletives. The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكَلِّمْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ

Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should talk what is good or keep silent (i.e. abstain from all kinds of evil and dirty talk).²

1. Remember these beautiful words of the Prophet ﷺ and either speak good or keep quiet.
2. Stay away from foul language, cussing, and evil words, because YOU are a Mu'min and a Mu'min does not utter filthy words or cuss at anyone.
3. Equally important is it to stay away from people who utter such vile language, because the more you hear it, the more desensitised you becomes to its evil, until it will no longer be considered evil.

In conclusion, foul language shows disrespect to those being spoken to and a total lack of self-respect. The one who stays away from filthy language is not being a prude or old-fashioned; rather he is a Mu'min and a follower of the best of creation, the Prophet ﷺ. Use of vile language and cursing are disrespectful, are not to be tolerated, and are not acceptable behaviour in Islam.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ لَيَتَكَلَّمُ بِالْكَلِمَةِ مَا يَنْبَغُ مَا فِيهَا يَهْوِي بِهَا فِي النَّارِ أَبْعَدَ مَا بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ

Truly, a man utters words to which he attaches no importance, and by them he falls into the Fire of Jahannam farther than the distance between the East and the West.³

May Allah ﷻ guide us to the way of the Prophet ﷺ, make us his true disciples, and save us from every such act that may lead to our destruction in this world and the next.

¹ Fatāwā al-Imām al-Nawawī.

² Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth: 6018.

³ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Ḥadīth: 2988.