

نزك الينفس

SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION RETREAT

**DON'T BELITTLE
MINOR SINS**

Shaykh Ahmad Musa Jibril حفظه الله

Spiritual Purification Retreat | Ramadan 1446

Don't Belittle Minor Sins

Ash-Shaykh Al-Imām Ahmad Mūsā Jibrīl (حفظه الله)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



I spoke in the past about some issues that pertain to the Fiqh of sins, and among the Fiqh of sins is not to belittle minor sins. Don't underestimate a sin even if it's among the minor sins. Random, exceptional, minor sins can easily be forgiven and erased in so many various ways. They can get erased through some of your daily 'Ibādāt without you even perceiving it at times, and that's from the Mercy of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى. That's unlike major sins that require a special, specific Tawbah for that particular sin, with the specified conditions. Minor sins can be forgiven, for example, by simply avoiding major sins.

إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ

If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your lesser sins...

Good deeds after minor sins wash away the minor sins.

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفَا مِنْ اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

And establish prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night. Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds.

Minor sins get washed away by the regular, obligatory Salawāt, by Ramadān, by Salāt Al-Jumu'ah, and by Hajj. The Hadīth in Sahīh Muslim,

الصلوات الخمس والجمعة إلى الجمعة، ورمضان إلى رمضان، مكفرات ما بينهن إذا اجتنب الكبائر

The five (daily) prayers and one Friday prayer to (the next) Friday prayer are expiations (for the sins committed in the intervals) between them.

Wudū' for Salāh also erases some of the minor sins. Adhkār after the Salawāt — SubhānAllāh, Alhamdulillah, Allāhu Akbar, saying each thirty-three times and then completing the hundred by saying لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ قَدِير is a forgiveness for minor sins. Saying “Amin” along with the Imām in the congregational Salāh is a forgiveness for minor sins, we took that in the Tafsir class recently. Fasting the Day of ‘Āshurā and fasting the Day of ‘Arafah is a forgiveness for minor sins. Saying سبحان الله وبحمده one-hundred times is a forgiveness for minor sins as well. Saying أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ is a forgiveness for minor sins. And there are many other various means as well.

During the previous Ramadān, we discussed Ahādīth of this nature and examined whether the forgiveness encompasses major sins, and we concluded that the prevalent opinion is that they don't cover major sins. Major sins require a special repentance for that particular sin, and while Al-Ghafūr Ar-Rahīm forgives these minor sins, there are instances where underestimating these minor sins can escalate their status into the level of major sins, and that can lead to one's destruction. The Messenger ﷺ, who taught us the various Ahādīth emphasizing the simplicity of obtaining forgiveness for minor sins, also warned about minor sins in numerous Ahādīth. In Musnad Ahmad on the authority of Sahl Ibn Sa'd رضي الله عنه the Messenger ﷺ said,

إِيَّاكُمْ وَمُحَقَّرَاتِ الذُّنُوبِ، فَإِنَّمَا مِثْلُ مُحَقَّرَاتِ الذُّنُوبِ كَقَوْمٍ نَزَلُوا فِي بَطْنٍ وَادٍ، فَجَاءَ ذَا بُعُودٍ، وَجَاءَ ذَا بُعُودٍ، حَتَّى أَنْضَجُوا خَبْزَتَهُمْ، وَإِنَّ مُحَقَّرَاتِ الذُّنُوبِ مَتَى يُؤْخَذَ بِهَا صَاحِبُهَا تَهْلِكُ

The Messenger ﷺ warned about Muhaqqarāt Adh-Dhunūb, the minor sins, the sins that people consider insignificant. The Messenger ﷺ in that Hadīth warned about underestimating minor sins, because they can add up and destroy a sinner. He compared minor sins to a group of people who are in a valley, and they want to make a fire. One person in the valley brings a stick, then another one brings a stick, and so on. Before you know it, they have enough sticks to make a fire and the fire is big enough to bake their bread. A single stick is insignificant to ignite a fire that is suitable for cooking. A single, minor, random, exceptional sin will not bring one's destruction Inshā'Allāh, and it will be forgiven through the means that we mentioned Inshā'Allāh. Once there are a lot of minor sins, it's like a bunch of sticks starting a big fire. Those sticks come together to make a huge fire, like small sins can pile up and eventually lead to the destruction of the sinner والعياذ بالله. Many avoid major sins and won't go near them. They're strong in resisting those major sins, but then they fall into many minor sins, and that's like an individual who encounters a lion and he manages to escape, then he faces a huge camel that's attacking him and he gets away, but then a tiny ant bites him and hurts him, and one ant leads to another and they swarm him and bring him down. That's similar to someone who steers clear of major sins, but still gets caught up in the minor sins. If you notice, the Messenger ﷺ in the Hadīth — this specific Hadīth — didn't warn about major sins, because they were rare among the Sahābah and they were very careful to avoid them. The Messenger ﷺ felt it was important to warn about little things that some may overlook, and that's a lesson for all of us not to get carried away with these sins since they get forgiven so easily. The frequent occurrence of small sins is dangerous, because it has a huge impact on the heart, similar to how drops of water can create a mark on a rock. Water is soft and the rock or cement is hard. If you were to see a faucet that dripped on a cement or on a tile, or a spring that constantly drips on a rock, that soft water will eventually make a mark on the cement and the rock, and that's how minor sins are to the heart. The Messenger ﷺ even warned Ā'ishah about this. He said,

يَا عَائِشَةُ إِيَّاكَ وَمُحَقَّرَاتِ الْأَعْمَالِ فَإِنَّ لَهَا مِنْ اللَّهِ طَالِبًا

O Ā'ishah! Beware of sins that are regarded as insignificant, because they have a special angel tasked with writing them down.

Having a special angel just for that shows how great and significant they are, even if they're labeled as minor sins.

Now there's an issue. If the minor sins can be easily absolved through the deeds that we mentioned — through Wudū', through the Salawāt, through Salāt Al-Jumu'ah — and most of them are observed by Muslims daily, then why did the Messenger ﷺ caution against them? What makes them so dangerous? Anas رضي الله عنه said — and Anas was speaking to the second best generation, the first best generation after the Sahābah, the Tābi'īn — he said,

إِنَّكُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ أَعْمَالًا، هِيَ أَدَقُّ فِي أَعْيُنِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّعْرِ، إِنْ كُنَّا لَنَعُدُّهَا عَلَى عَهْدِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ مِنَ الْمَوْبِقَاتِ

You indulge in actions which you consider as tiny as hair, you consider it insignificant. During the Messenger ﷺ's time, we used to regard them as Al-Mūbiqāt, as destructive sins.

Aside from the general effect of sins that we took and that we know about, and we spoke about in the past, the danger of minor sins arises when an individual remains steadfast in continuously committing a single minor sin or the combination of many, various minor sins. When such a behavior becomes habitual and a person is persistent in committing that one minor sin or those various minor sins, it escalates to the level of a major sin, and that's according to the majority Ulamā' — and among them from the Sahābah is Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله

عنهما, and from the Ulamā' is Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Al-Qayyim, Ibn Rajab, An-Nawawi, and many others. A minor sin retains its status — it's always a minor sin — however, certain external circumstances can elevate it to the status of a major sin, such as persistence in committing that minor sin. Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Al-Qayyim both stated that continual commission of minor sins may be considered equivalent to a major sin or potentially even more severe. Persistence on minor sins indicates lack of respect and care, which goes against honoring Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما said,

لا صغيرة مع الإصرار ولا كبيرة مع الاستغفار

There's no minor sin with persistence, and there's no major sin with Istighfar.

It's not an authentic Hadīth, but it's authentic as a statement of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما. What does that mean? Meaning with Istighfar, with Tawbah, the major sin is forgiven Inshā'Allāh. With persistence on minor sins, it's no longer a minor sin, it's the equivalent of a major sin.

So the first danger is persistence on committing minor sins. The second is underestimating the sin. Minor sins shouldn't be taken lightly. Taking them lightly can show a lack of respect and regard to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Fudayl Ibn 'Iyad said, *"The smaller the sin seems to you, the bigger it is to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and the bigger it seems to you, the smaller it is to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى."* And that can be explained by another statement that was mentioned by Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه. He said, *"The believer perceives his sins, whether big or small, as if he's sitting underneath a mountain that may fall on his head. And the Fājir sees his sins like a fly that passes on his nose, he motions to the fly with his hand to get it away."* That's how he sees sins, a Fājir. Seeing it as a big deal, no matter what type of sin it is, whether major or minor, seeing them as a big deal lessens the impact on the heart and on the Judgment Day Inshā'Allāh. Underestimating a sin eventually

leads to normalization of that sin, which has a negative effect on the heart, and it may lead to committing major sins. When someone is about to commit a small sin, there are two ways to look at it. One way is to say, *"It's just a minor sin, it's not a big deal. It's just a glance and a kiss and a touch. I'll go ahead with it. Next Wudū', next Salāh, next Ramadān it'll be forgiven Inshā'Allāh."* The other way to look at it is to consider Who is being disobeyed when committing that sin. The second option is the ideal thinking of the believer. Al-Awza'i reported that Bilāl Ibn Sa'd, a Tābi'i, stated in his famous quote,

لا تنظر إلى صغر الخطيئة ولكن انظر من عصيت

Don't think about how small the sin is, think about who you disobeyed, or who you're going to disobey.

Think of how mighty the one you're disobeying is. Some people wouldn't go against their spouses or their parents in something that their spouses or parents don't like, even if they can get away with it without them knowing, because they love them, they respect them, and they honor them. However, for some, it seems that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is the least important witness to their sins. They don't estimate Allāh سبحانه وتعالى with an estimation due to Him when they're sinning.

Another danger in the small sins is feeling happy about them. Some Ulamā' listed feeling happy about committing a small sin or being proud of a sin as a major sin. Some person can look at a Haram glance and feel happy about it, and that can elevate it to the status of a major sin. Another person could glance at a Haram and regret it, and the next Salāh, the next Wudū', it's forgiven Inshā'Allāh.

Another danger similar to the previous one is openly and publicly committing the sins and bragging and talking about the sins — bragging about sins or talking about them while Allāh سبحانه وتعالى concealed them for you. Talking about sins or bragging about them or exposing the sins to others elevates it to the

status of a major sin. Unless one, of course, is mentioning the sin to a Shaykh to get some advice on repenting or something of that nature. Yes, you committed the minor sin, but you tagged on a major sin by boasting about that sin or committing that sin in public. That falls under Mujāharah.

كُلُّ أُمَّتِي مُعَافَاةٌ إِلَّا الْمُجَاهِرِينَ

All the people of my Ummah would get pardon for their sins except those who publicize them.

A believer feels scared and shy of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, and he hides his faults and is ashamed of his faults while he tries to purify himself and repent from those faults. Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما said there are things that follow a sin that can be worse than the original sin itself. He said feeling no shame of Raqīb and 'Atīd on your right and your left while committing a sin is worse than the sin itself. He [also] said laughing about a sin without realizing what Allāh سبحانه وتعالى might do to you is worse than the sin itself. He said being happy that you succeeded in committing the sin is worse than the sin itself. He said feeling sad about missing out on a sin is worse than the sin itself. And he said being scared of the wind moving the curtain at your door while you're sinning, fearing someone will see you, but not being troubled by the thought of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى watching you is worse than the actual sin itself. Abu Al-'Abbās, 'Abdullāh Ibn Al-Mu'taz Billāh was a poet during the 'Abāssi Khilāfah. He said,

خل الذنوب صغيرها وكبيرها ذاك التقى

Abandon minor and major sins. That's piety, that's Taqwā.

Sins in this Dunyā should be looked at like a ground full of thorns.

واصنع كماشٍ فوق أرض الشوك يحذر ما يرى

One who walks over a thorny ground walks carefully and is always cautious of thorns that lie ahead of him.

And that's how one should walk on this earth in relationship to sins.

لا تحقرن صغيرة إن الجبال من الحصى

Don't underestimate the small sins, because mountains are made from pebbles.

And we'll stop here.

وصلی اللہ علی سیدنا محمد وعلی آلہ وصحبہ وسلم