

#HIDDENVOICES

Giving a voice to the ones who are kept hidden in the shadows of abuse.

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(recommended by Sheikh Abu Esa Ni'amatullah and was revised by Imam Abdullah Hasan)*

First Half of Khutbah

God says:

“And we wrote in the Psalms (*zabur*), after having sent down the Torah, that “the righteous will inherit the earth”; in this is a message for the worshipful; and we have sent you only as a mercy to all of creation.” [Sūrah al-Anbiyā: 105-108]

The Messenger of God was mercy to all of creation; to Muslim and non-Muslim; to young and old; to man and woman; to adult and child. He exemplified for us merciful acts and how to realize God's mercy in our lives. He guided us to the etiquette and ethics of all we need to gain salvation in this life and the next, through submission to the word and command of God and realizing his word in our daily lives.

Was this mercy unrestricted? Was his mercy and compassion unregulated, so much that he allowed for everyone to do anything without consequence, without speaking out against injustice and wrong?

There were, on a few occasions, instances where some people had transgressed so far that the Prophet gave up on them, supplicating to God to handle them.

Here are a few examples:

a) While in Makkah, the Quraysh would harass the Prophet and throw animal remains on his back, he supplicated “Oh God, deal with Quraysh.” [1]

b) The Messenger sent a letter to Khusro, emperor of Persia, inviting him to Islam. He tore it up, so the Prophet supplicated “They will be torn apart as a nation.” [2]

c) Due to the high level of transgression, aggression, torture and enmity shown by some of the leaders of Quraysh, the Prophet supplicated against them saying “Oh God deal with Abū Jahl; deal with `Utbah ibn Rabīah; and Shaybah ibn Rabīah; and al-Walīd ibn `Utbah; and Umayyah ibn Khalaf; and Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'ayt.” [3]

How many of us want to take the chance?

How many of us would like to place ourselves in the shoes of Khusro, Abū Jahl, `Utbah, Shaybah, al-Walīd ibn `Utbah, and Umayyah ibn Khalaf?

How many of us could deal with knowing that the Messenger of God, whose supplications are accepted by default, has supplicated against us?

How many of us would be comforted to know that due to our own transgressions have become so despicable that the man entrusted by God himself to establish God's will on earth has called upon the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth to deal personally with us?

I'll tell you of one such man:

`Alī ibn Abī Tālib narrated that the wife of a man in Madinah came to the Messenger of God, complaining of her husband. The Messenger of God heard her case, and said to her: “Go back and tell him that I am in the Messenger of God's protection”. So she went back, and after some time she came back to the Messenger saying “He hasn't stopped/Hasn't left me alone”. At this, the Messenger of God took his shirt and cut a piece off of it, gave it to the woman, and said “Go back to him and tell him that the Messenger of God said: This is a piece of my shirt.” (as evidence and a summons so that he could be tried for his actions) She left and later returned saying “Oh Messenger of God! He only beat me more!” He then raised his hands and supplicated: “*Oh God, deal with Walīd! Oh God, deal with Walīd! Oh God, deal with Walīd!*” [4]

How many of us could deal with knowing that the Messenger of God, whose supplications are accepted by default, has supplicated against us?

That we, due to our own transgressions, have become so despicable that the Prophet had given up on us and called upon God himself to deal with us?

Domestic Abuse is a reality in our communities, it is not something that affects non-Muslims alone, but all of humanity.

Did you know?

- Around the world at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Most often the abuser is a member of her own family.

- Twelve million women (25% of the female population) will be abused in their lifetime.

- Up to 35% of women and 22% of men presenting to the emergency department have experienced domestic violence.

Abuse is not exclusive to one gender, age group, ethnicity, or national origin. But it is an issue that we as a community must come to terms with, and must not tolerate.

There are many types of abuse, and many of you may be saying “The vast majority of us have never inflicted physical, emotional, or verbal abuse, never will, and can never imagine it.” Some of you may even think that this message has no weight. But it does, because like it or not we have people that frequent our congregations that abuse their families. And if, Alhamdulillah, you are not one of those people, it is your responsibility to take this message today to others and help to prevent abuse before it occurs.

Physical Abuse

When speaking on physical abuse, some of you may be saying to yourselves “I have license to do such a thing”; i.e. that mentioned in the verse 4:34.

I don't want to get into too many specifics about that verse, or even quote it here. But let's be honest, you won't find abusive people thumbing through the Qur'ān and ḥadīth to find out what he or she should or should not be

doing before they lash out at their loved ones. You will find them trying to justify their actions afterwards by misapplying this verse.

Abusive people are not following God's guidance, and are certainly not following the injunctions in the verse to advise, then to separate, so-on and so-forth. But to prevent any further misuse of this verse, let's make it clear, authorities on the Qur'ān have read this verse in three ways:

1. Some held that this verse means for a man to show he is angry to his wife, nothing more. This is the explanation made by `Atā, one of the greatest scholars of the Quran. [5]
2. Others state that what God permitted in 4:34 was only after a series of conditions are met as a way of restricting already rampant abusive behavior.
3. Another restricts that to only those that have state authority to reprimand and penalize its citizenry. Just as the only person that will apply the law to men are the state authorities, the same goes with applying this verse to women. The verse, read contextually with those before and after it, point to this.

In short, arguments can be made for days on end as to which of these positions is more correct. The real test of this verse is what we as believers are going to do with it. In other words, what responsibility will you take for your actions when situations like this occur? How will we react?

Regardless of interpretation one thing is clear: those that are abusive are not in line with any of these three readings of the verse. Can anyone actively abusing a loved one honestly say that they have fulfilled any of the stipulations above?

Let's be honest with ourselves, the answer is no. Had they been, they would have sought counsel beforehand, and the problem would not have escalated.

Other forms of Abuse

While many of us may have not committed physical abuse, we have, however committed lower levels of abuse. By neglecting our loved one's needs, by raising our voices at home and not holding back anger, or by being demeaning and being condescending when speaking to our family members.

These constitute domestic abuse as well, and they embolden the anger and resentment within us to build up to the point where few who had never imagined that they would, will commit the unimaginable.

Let me ask the men in the room: If I were to tie you down in a chair, and say all of the worst things to you, things that I won't mention on the *Minbar*, then spit in your face, what would you want to do to me?

Let's say that you were pulled over by the police, and the policeman said the same to you. You would probably want to deck him, but you wouldn't; you'd show restraint. Why is it easy for you to restrain yourself with those that have no relation to you, but not with those that you love? These are honest questions that you have to ask yourself.

Verbal Abuse

The Prophet warned of verbally abusing each other, and our families have the most right to be safe from our tongues.

He (*ṣallallāhu `alayhi wa-sallam*) said: "Whoever says to his brother "Oh *Kāfir*", then its applies to at least one of them." [6]

He (*ṣallallāhu `alayhi wa-sallam*) also said "To curse a believer is like murdering him." [7]

Because of this danger, he also said "Whoever preserves that between his jaws will have paradise." [8]

Is not calling someone a disbeliever a form of verbal abuse? Why then do we use the term "*kāfir*" to refer to our loved ones when they do something that we feel is improper or un-Islamic? Why do we hear about men calling their wives prostitutes, or mothers and fathers using that word to refer to their daughters? Is this not verbal abuse? Would you like for people to refer to you in this way?

Emotional Abuse

We all know of the story of two of the *Sahabah*, one of whom his wife was distraught and in a bad physical and mental shape; the Prophet informed this women's husband: "Your body has rights, your Lord has rights, your guests have rights, your family has rights; given everyone that has a right their due." [9]

At times we say and do things, even if we are doing something that is correct, that can cause neglect to be shown to those that we are entrusted with caring for.

Remember: Prevention is better than cure

The Prophet said “The worst of people are those that are quick to anger, but slow to self-correct.” [10]

He (*ṣallallāhu `alayhi wa-sallam*) also said “The best of acts is to cause another Muslim to feel joy.” [11]; can we say that the opposite is true then, that the one of the worst acts is to cause another Muslim to be depressed and sad?

He (*ṣallallāhu `alayhi wa-sallam*) said “The strong amongst you is not one of physical strength; the strong is the person who restrains themselves when angry.” [12]

God praises restraint saying:

“Race to forgiveness from your Lord, and paradise; the expanse of which is like the heavens and earth; prepared for the believers. Those that spend in hardship and ease; restrain their anger; and they forgive the people. And God love those that strive for excellence.” [Sūrah Āl-`Imrān: 133-134]

May God make us from those that strive for excellence, restrain our anger, and respect our families.

Second half of Khutbah:

God says:

“We presented the trust to the Heavens, the earth, and the mountains; but they refused to carry it; frightened by the responsibility. But instead Man carried it; he was iniquitous and very ignorant.” [Sūra al-Aḥzāb: 72]

The Qur’ān calls human responsibility “the Trust.” God offered the Trust to all of creation, but only we as human beings agreed to carry it. The burden of this Trust is that we have the ability to create and destroy; we have the free-will that not even the Angels are endowed with, whom we can choose to be higher than in our character. We can as well, be as hard-headed and stubborn as a rock, or as low and detestable as a beast.

The Prophet said that for “Every person who betrays his trusts, a banner will be placed for him on the Day of Judgment, as long as his betrayal...” [13]

Our families are trusts from God, trusts that we cannot betray; once the Prophet got word that some people were beating their wives, he declared “Those are not the best of you”. He asked his congregation once “How is it that one of you can beat your wife, like an animal ... then go and try to cozy up to her?” [14]

I want to remind you all of a very important point; that for these reasons and more, scholars of Islamic law have said that a person is innocent until proven guilty in everything, except physical abuse. If a woman brings proof of abuse against her husband, he is tasked with disproving that evidence, not the other way around.

As a community, both as leaders and lay people, we have a responsibility to ensure that those entrusted in our care are not abused. We can't hide the realities of abuse when they are known. The Prophet clearly would not hide such things; Fatima bint Qays came to him seeking his advice on marriage. She said that Muawiyah and Abū Jahm had both proposed to her. The Messenger of God told her “As for Muawiyah, he is poor and has no money; as for Abū Jahm, then he is a wife-beater; marry Usāmah instead.” [15]

Abuse is not the only thing that we need to stop; as we said prevention is better than cure. Sometimes when warning signs present themselves, we must be proactive, when the signs appear, in curbing even possible abuse.

One example of the past was family strife. This was enough to disqualify one man from his position of power.

One of `Umar ibn Al-Khattāb's employees came to him one day, finding him lying on his back, with his children playing around him. He became angry and told them to stop. `Umar said to him: “How are you with your family?” He replied: “When I come in the house those talking go silent!” `Umar said to him “You are officially fired; if you can't show compassion to your own wife and children, how can I expect you to do so with the Ummah of Muḥammad?” [16]

So I ask in closing, which of us...

... is strong enough to hold back his anger?

...is strong enough to fight his own soul instead of his spouse?

Who from amongst us can strive to be the best of us, and not act like a beast?

And if we cannot achieve that, if we can't prevent ourselves from such injustice, then we have ask ourselves:

“If the Prophet were to supplicate saying “Oh God, you deal with him” would you have anywhere to run to, and anywhere to hide from in this life or the next?

Closing Du`a

Oh Allāh forgive us our sins, and our transgressions, pardon our lapses, and make us from amongst the guided.

Oh Allāh give us happy lives, vibrant livelihoods, and make us couples whom between them is mercy and tranquility, and guide us to the best of practices.

Oh Allāh pardon those who have repented to you, and have turned away from abuse, and sought your forgiveness.

Oh Allāh, those who refuse to cease from their abuse, and do not repent, then deal with them.

Oh Allāh deal with those that transgress against their spouses and children, those that have transgressed your boundaries, and sinned against you.

Those that have harmed your servants and betrayed their trusts.

Oh Allāh forgive us all, Muslim men and women, believing men and women, and make us from those that abide by your commands, and follow the guidance of your Messenger.

References

- [1] Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim from Ibn Mas`ūd.
- [2] Narrated by al-Bukhārī from Ibn `Abbās.
- [3] Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim from Ibn Mas`ūd.
- [4] Narrated by al-Bazzār with this wording, aṭ-Ṭabarī declaring this *isnād* authentic. Al-Bukhārī declared a similar wording authentic in his *Juz' Raf' al-Yadayn*.
- [5] See the *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* of Ibn al-`Arabī.
- [6] Narrated by al-Bukhārī from Ibn `Umar.
- [7] Narrated by al-Bukhārī from Thābit ibn Dahhāk.
- [8] Narrated by al-Bukhārī from Sahl ibn Sa'd.
- [9] Narrated by al-Bukhārī from Wahb ibn `Abdullāh.
- [10] From the *ḥadīth* of Abū Saīd al-Khudrī as in al-Amālī al-Mutlaqah. Ibn Ḥajar declared it *ḥasan*. A similar narration is found in at-Tirmidhī which he declared *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*.
- [11] From the *ḥadīth* of `Abdullāh ibn `Umar, Al-Albānī declared it *ḥasan li ghayrihī* in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhib*.
- [12] Narrated by al-Bukhārī from Abū Hurayrah.
- [13] Narrated by Muslim from the *ḥadīth* of Abū Saīd.
- [14] Narrated by al-Bukhārī from `Abdullāh ibn Zam'ah.
- [15] Narrated by Muslim from Fatima bint Qays.
- [16] Mentioned in *Kitāb al-Mustatraf*.