

Sunan Abī Dāwūd [4888] – Corrupting People by Searching for their Faults



Commentaries by **Imām ibn Athīr** [d. 606H], **Shaykh Muḥammad bin Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uthaymīn** [d. 1421H], and **Ḥāfiẓ Ṣalāḥuddīn Yūsuf** [d. 1441H]



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Book 43: Book of general behavior (Kitāb al-Adab) Chapter 44: Regarding spying

حَدَّثَنَا عَيْسَى بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الرَّمِيُّ، وَابْنُ عَوْفٍ، وَهَذَا لَفْظُهُ قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا الْفَرِيَّابِيُّ، عَنْ سُفْيَانَ، عَنْ نَوْرِ، عَنْ رَاشِدِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: «إِنَّكَ إِنْ اتَّبَعْتَ عَوْرَاتِ النَّاسِ أَفْسَدْتَهُمْ، أَوْ كِدْتَ أَنْ تُفْسِدَهُمْ»

فَقَالَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: كَلِمَةٌ سَمِعَهَا مُعَاوِيَةُ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ نَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِهَا.

It is narrated on the authority of Mu'āwiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ that he said: I heard the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ say: **"If you search for the faults of the people, you will corrupt them, or will nearly corrupt them."**

Abū Dardā' رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said: 'These are the words which Mu'āwiyah himself from the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and Allāh benefited him by them.'

→ **Commentary by ibn Athīr رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ:**

'If you falsely accuse people and publicly announce them as probably guilty of offenses, that makes them do what they are accused of and they become corrupted.' Being cheerful to people rejects falsely accusing them and spreading evil about them while they are actually innocent. (1)

→ **Commentary by Shaykh Muḥammad bin Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ:**

These aḥādīth are among the aḥādīth highlighting the prohibition of spying on one's Muslim brothers. He should not seek their secrets; rather, he should relate with them according to what is apparent from their lives. As for that which is not apparent, it is not permissible for a Muslim to spy or probe into other people's lives as contained in the ḥadīth of Mu'āwiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ that a person who finds faults with Muslims will corrupt them or bring them close to destruction. This is because most matters are between a slave and his Lord, with the knowledge of no one. If none has found out some of those secrets, the veil of Allāh – the Mighty and Sublime – will remain on them and the person

(1) [248 (1/174-175), Al-Adab al-Mufrad, Dakwah Corner Publications (Eng)]

may be able to repent to his Lord – the Mighty and Sublime – and improve his condition. Thus, no one would have discovered his secrets.

However, when a person, refuge is with Allāh, seeks the faults of others by snooping, he will begin to spy whenever a secret is mentioned to him. He may go about it in clear terms or employ cunning means by saying, for instance, ‘They said so-and-so said such-and-such,’ or ‘He did this-and-that.’ Thus, he will begin to spread the person's defects in the presence of the people, refuge is with Allāh.

It is reported in a ḥadīth that the Prophet ﷺ said: **“O assembly of those who believe with their tongue with no faith in their hearts! You should not harm the Muslims and do not seek for their secrets. Whoever looks for the secrets of his brother, Allāh will look for his secrets. And whoever Allāh looks for his secrets will be exposed by Him even if he is in his house.”** (2)

«يَا مَعْشَرَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِلِسَانِهِ، وَلَمْ يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ قَلْبُهُ، لَا تَغْتَابُوا الْمُسْلِمِينَ، وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا عَوْرَاتِهِمْ، فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ اتَّبَعَ عَوْرَاتِهِمْ يَتَّبِعْ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ، وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ يَفْضَحْهُ فِي بَيْتِهِ»

Allāh will look for the faults of the one who looks for other people's fault in order to expose them, we ask Allāh for well-being. Walls and curtains will not be of any benefit for such person. (3)

→ **Commentary by Ḥāfiẓ Ṣalāḥuddīn Yūsuf رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ:**

If a Muslim looks for the defects of another and hunts for his weaknesses, other Muslims will also adopt the same attitude towards him, and this situation will create dissension and conflict in society. This also will make them fall prey to sins and make them persistent in committing them. For this reason, spying and finding faults with Muslims has been prohibited by sharī'ah. (4)

Takhrīj:

- Musnad Abī Ya'lā (7389 (1/2019))
- Musnad Shāmīn (473 (1/272))
- Ṣaḥīḥ at-Targhīb (2342 (2/589))
- Ṣaḥīḥ ibn Hibbān (5760 (13/72-73))
- Ṣaḥīḥ Mawārid az-Zamān (1249 (2/59))
- Bayḥaqī's Sunan al-Kubrā (17623 (8/578))

(2) Sunan Abī Dāwūd (4880); Musnad Aḥmad (19776 & 19801); and others.

(3) [1571-1572 (6/293-294), Riyāḍuṣ Ṣāliḥīn, Dārussalām (Eng)]

(4) [1571 (2/1175), Riyāḍuṣ Ṣāliḥīn, Dārussalām (Eng)]

- Shu'ab al-Īmān (9212 (12/159-160))
- Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr (890 (19/379))
- Sharḥ as-Sunnah (13/106)
- Ḥilyatul Awliyā' (6/117)
- Kanzul 'Ummāl (14356 (5/776))
- Kanzul 'Ummāl (14639 (6/16))
- Kanzul 'Ummāl (14784 (6/46))
- Al-Ādāb ash-Shar'īyah (1/300)
- Al-Adab al-Mufrad (248 (1/93))
- Mishkāṭ al-Maṣābīḥ (3709)
- Riyāḍuṣ Ṣāliḥīn (1571)
- Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' (2295 (1/455))
- Ghāyatul Marām (424 (1/242))

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