

Chapter 48

Someone who Mocks Anything Containing the Mention of Allāh, or the Qur’ān, or the Messenger

Allāh, Most High, says,

“If you ask them they will say, ‘We were only joking and playing around.’ Say, ‘Would you make a mockery of Allāh and of His Signs and of His Messenger? Do not try to excuse yourselves, you have disbelieved after having believed.’”¹

Ibn `Umar, Muḥammad ibn Ka`b, Zayd ibn Aslam, and Qatādah said (combining their various narrations), ‘During the Battle of Tabūk, a man said, “We have not seen the likes of these reciters of ours: the most avaricious of people, the most untruthful of tongue, and the most cowardly when (the armies) meet,” he was referring to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and the reciters amongst his Companions. `Awf ibn Mālik said to him, “You are lying! Rather you are a hypocrite! I will inform the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.” He went to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ to inform him but found that (verses of the) Qur’ān had already been revealed concerning the incident. The man then came to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ who had mounted his camel and started riding, saying, “Messenger of Allāh, we were only idly chatting, speaking as riders do amongst themselves to cut short the journey!” Ibn `Umar said, “I can still see him clinging to the saddle-belt of the Messenger of Allāh’s camel, stones bouncing up and battering his legs, while he was saying, ‘We were only idly chatting and playing!’ and the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was saying to him *‘Would you make a mockery of Allāh and of His Signs and of His Messenger? Do not try to excuse yourselves, you have disbelieved after having believed.’* He would not turn to face him, nor would he say anything else.”²

Issues

1. The issue of paramount importance: whoever mocks these is a disbeliever.
2. This is the exegesis of the verse and applies to whoever does this.
3. The distinction between tale-carrying, *namīmah*, and sincere advice, *naṣīḥah*, for the sake of Allāh and His Messenger.
4. The distinction between pardoning, which Allāh loves, and harshness and severity to the enemies of Allāh.
5. There are some excuses that are just not acceptable.

Commentary

The author said, “Someone who mocks anything containing the mention of Allāh, or the Qur’ān, or the Messenger,” i.e. he has disbelieved.³

Allāh, Most High, says,

“If you ask them they will say, ‘We were only joking and playing around.’ Say, ‘Would you make a mockery of Allāh and of His Signs and of His Messenger? Do not try to excuse yourselves, you have disbelieved after having believed.’”

al-`Imād ibn Kathīr said in exegesis to this verse,

Abū Ma`shar al-Madanī reports on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Ka`b al-Qurazī, and others, who said, ‘A man from the hypocrites said, “I have not seen the likes of these reciters of ours: the greediest of us, the most untruthful of tongue amongst us, and the most cowardly of us when (the armies) meet.” This was conveyed to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ while he had mounted his camel and had commenced riding. The man said, “Messenger of Allāh, we were only idly chatting, playing, speaking as riders do in order to cut short the journey!” The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said,

“Say, ‘Would you make a mockery of Allāh and of His Signs and of His Messenger? Do not try to excuse yourselves, you have disbelieved after having believed. If one group of you is pardoned, another group will be punished for being evildoers.’”⁴

He was clinging onto the saddle-belt of the Messenger of Allāh’s camel, his legs dragging through the pebbles causing them to batter his legs, and the Messenger of Allāh would not look at him.’

`Abdullāh ibn Wahb said: Hishām ibn Sa`d informed me, on the authority of Zayd ibn Aslam, on the authority of `Abdullāh ibn `Umar who said, ‘During the Battle of Tabūk, in a gathering, a man said, “We have not seen the likes of these reciters of ours: the greediest of people, the most untruthful of tongue, and the most cowardly when (the armies) meet.” Another person in the gathering said, “You are lying! Rather you are a hypocrite! I will inform the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. This was conveyed to him ﷺ and (verses of the) Qur`ān were revealed.” `Abdullāh ibn `Umar said, ‘I saw him clinging onto the saddle-bag of the Messenger of Allāh’s camel, the stones battering him, saying, “Messenger of Allāh, we were only idly chatting and playing!” The Messenger of Allāh was saying,

“Say, ‘Would you make a mockery of Allāh and of His Signs and of His Messenger? Do not try to excuse yourselves, you have disbelieved after having believed.’”⁵

A similar narration was also reported by Layth on the authority of Hishām ibn Sa`d.

Ibn Ishāq said, ‘There was a group of the hypocrites amongst whom was Wadī`ah ibn Thābit, brother to Umayyah ibn Zayd ibn `Amr ibn `Awf, and a man from Ashja`, allied to Banū Salamah, who was called Makhshiy ibn Ḥumayyir. They would point to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ who was on his way to Tabūk and say to each other, “Do you think the Battle against Banū al-Aṣfar⁶ was akin to the Arabs fighting each other?”... Makhshiy ibn Humayyir said, “By Allāh, I wished that I had the authority to pass judgment that every single one of us be lashed one hundred times. We would be lucky to escape something of the Qur`ān being revealed concerning us and these words of yours!” The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ – as has been conveyed to me – said to `Ammār ibn Yāsir, “Go to those people for they are destroyed! Ask them what they have said. If they deny anything, tell them that they have said this and this and this.” `Ammār went to them and said this to them. They then came to the Messenger of Allāh, presenting their excuses. Wadī`ah ibn Thābit said, clinging onto the saddle bag of the camel on which the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was seated, “We were only idly chatting and playing.” [The verse was then revealed.] Makhshiy ibn Ḥumayyir⁷ said, “Messenger of Allāh, my name and my father’s name handicapped me!” It seems that it was he who was referred to as [the one pardoned] in His, Most High, saying,

“If one group of you is pardoned, another group will be punished for being evildoers.”⁸

As a result he was then called `Abdu`l-Raḥmān. He asked Allāh that He cause him to die as a martyr and that none know where he was killed. He was killed at the Battle of Yamāmah and no trace of him was found.⁹

[Qatādah said, ‘The Prophet (SAW) was embarking on the Battle of Tabūk, travelling with him was a party of hypocrites. They said, “He thinks that he will conquer the palaces and fortresses of Rome! This is sheer nonsense!” Allāh apprised His Prophet (SAW) of what they had said and he said, “Bring that group of people to me!” He called them and said, “You said this and this,” and they swore that they were only idly chatting and playing.’]

ʿIkrimah said in commentary to this verse, ‘A man who Allāh had pardoned if He so wills said, “O Allāh, I have heard a verse, and I am meant by that verse, at it the skins shiver and the hearts tremble. O Allāh, make my death a death in Your way and let no one say, ‘I washed him, I shrouded him, I buried him.’” He was killed at the Battle of Yamāmah, the bodies of all Muslims were recovered save his.’

“Do not try to excuse yourselves, you have disbelieved after having believed,” through this mockery ***“If one group of you is pardoned,”*** i.e. Makhshiy ibn Ḥumayyir ***“another group will be punished,”*** i.e. all of you will not be pardoned, rather some of you will definitely be punished, ***“for being evildoers,”*** because of these vile and sinful words.¹⁰

Shaykhu’l-Islām said, ‘Allāh, Most High, ordered him to say to them, ***“you have disbelieved after having believed.”*** Those who state that they disbelieved after a superficial profession of faith, i.e. verbally with disbelief remaining in their hearts from the onset are incorrect. This is because a mere verbal profession of faith coupled with disbelief in the heart is actually disbelief and it cannot be said that such a person has disbelieved after having believed since, in reality, he has always been a disbeliever. If what they mean is that you have openly shown disbelief after openly showing belief,¹¹ (this too is incorrect) since they only openly showed disbelief with their close associates, not people in general, and their close associates knew from the beginning that they were disbelievers, yet the wording (of the verse) does not indicate that they had always been hypocrites.’¹²

He, may Allāh have mercy on him, said in another place, ‘He informs us that they disbelieved after having believed despite their excuse that they were merely speaking words of disbelief without actually believing them, that they said them by way of idle chatter and play. He explained that their mocking the signs of Allāh is disbelief and can only arise from someone whose heart has accepted these words and found them easy to articulate. If faith was in his heart, it would have prevented him from articulating them. The Qur’ān explains that faith in the heart must necessarily lead to outward deeds commensurate (with its strength) such as in His, Most High’s, saying,

“They say, ‘We have faith in Allāh and in the Messenger and we obey.’ Then after that a group of them turn away. Such people are not believers. When they are summoned to Allāh and His Messenger, so that he can judge between them, a group of them immediately turn away. But if right is on their side, they come to him submissively! Is there a sickness in their hearts or do they have misgivings or do they fear that Allāh and His Messenger will be unjust to them? No, it is simply that they are wrongdoers. The reply of the believers when they are summoned to Allāh and His Messenger so that he can judge between them is to say, ‘We hear and we obey.’ They are the ones who are successful.”¹³

Here He negated belief from one who turns away from obeying the Messenger, and informs us that the believers are those who, when called to Allāh and His Messenger for judgment, hear and obey; as such He explained that this was from the necessary consequences of faith.’

The (incident) shows that a person could disbelieve by a word he speaks or a deed he does. Of greater danger are the desires and beliefs of the heart for they are like a boundless ocean. It inculcates a fear of major hypocrisy for Allāh, Most High, affirmed faith for these people before they said what they said.

Ibn Abī Mulaykah said, ‘I have met thirty Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, each one fearing hypocrisy in himself.’¹⁴

“We have not seen the likes of these reciters of ours.”¹⁵

ʿAwf ibn Mālīk said to him, “You are lying! Rather you are a hypocrite! I will inform the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.”¹⁶

“Messenger of Allāh, we were only idly chatting, speaking as riders do amongst themselves to cut short the journey!”¹⁷

“He would not turn to face him, nor would he say anything else.”¹⁸

We ask Allāh for safety, pardon, and well-being in this life and the Hereafter.

¹ *al-Tawbah* (9): 65-66

² Ṭabarī and ibn Abī Ḥātim with a ḥasan isnād on the authority of ibn ʿUmar. Cf. Muqbil ibn Hādī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad min Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, pg. 71

The narrations of Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb, Zayd ibn Aslam, and Qatādah are recorded by Ṭabarī with mursal isnāds.

³ Shaykh Saʿdī, *al-Qawl al-Sadīd*, said, ‘This negates faith in its entirety and ejects a person from the fold of the religion. This is because the foundation of this religion is to have faith in Allāh, His Books, and His Messengers, and part and parcel of this faith is to venerate them. It is known that mocking and ridiculing any of these is actually worse than mere disbelief because in the former case one has disbelieved and, in addition, demeaned and belittled. The disbelievers are of two types: those who shun and those who oppose and contend; those who oppose are at war with Allāh and His Messenger, they abuse Allāh, His religion, and His Messenger, and their disbelief is the worse of the two and effectuates greater corruption. One who mocks any aspect of these falls under this latter case.’

Shaykh Sulaymān, *Taysīr al-ʿAzīz*, said, ‘This negates *Tawḥīd* and it is for this reason that the scholars are unanimously agreed that whoever does any aspect of this has disbelieved. Therefore anyone who mocks Allāh, His Book, His Messenger, or His religion has disbelieved, even if he was only joking and not intending actual mockery, this by consensus.’

⁴ *al-Tawbah* (9): 65-66

⁵ *al-Tawbah* (9): 65-66

⁶ *Banū Asfar*, “yellow skins,” an epithet referring to the light skin of the Byzantines.

⁷ Qurṭubī: they have differed about what his name actually was. It is said that it was Makhshī ibn Ḥumayyir as stated by ibn Ishāq. Ibn Ḥishām said that he was called ibn Makhshī. Khalīfah ibn Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh*, said that his name was Mukhāshin ibn Ḥumayyir. Ibn ʿAbduʿl-Barr mentioned that it was Mukhāshin ibn al-Ḥumayyirī. Suhaylī mentioned that it was Mukhashshin ibn Ḥumayyir. They all stated that he was martyred at Yamāmah. He repented and was called ʿAbduʿl-Raḥman. He supplicated to Allāh asking Him that he be martyred and that none know where his grave was. It is differed as to whether he was a hypocrite or a Muslim. It is said that he was a hypocrite and then sincerely repented, and it is said that he was a Muslim, he heard the hypocrites saying what they said and laughed along with them without objecting to what they said.

⁸ *al-Tawbah* (9): 66

⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, vol. 2, pg. 524

¹⁰ Ṭabarī: Allāh, Most High, says to His Prophet, Muḥammad ﷺ, ‘Muḥammad, if you were to ask these hypocrites about the falsehood and lies they have been uttering, they would say in response, “We only said that in play, we were only idly chatting and joking.” Allāh then says to Muḥammad ﷺ, ‘**“Say: Would you make a mockery of Allāh and of His Signs and of His Messenger?”**’...Allāh then says, ‘Say to these people whose qualities I have described to you, **“Do not try to excuse yourselves,”** falsely, saying that you were only idly chatting and playing, **“you have disbelieved,”** you have rejected the truth through these words you uttered about the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and those who believe in him, **“after having believed,”** after your belief in him and attestation of him.’

Qurṭubī: Qāḍī ibn al-`Arabī said, ‘What they said was either uttered in seriousness or in jest. In either case it is disbelief; to joke with statements of disbelief is itself disbelief and there is no difference concerning this amongst the nation. Exactness, *taḥqīq*, is the brother of knowledge and truth, and jest is the brother of falsehood and ignorance.’

Rāzī: The second issue: Allāh, Most High, explains that this mockery is disbelief. The intellect dictates that employing disbelief to play around is not allowed and as such it is affirmed that their words, **“We were only joking and playing around,”** is not a valid excuse allowing them to do what they did. Since it, in and of itself, is not an excuse, Allāh prohibited them from using it as one because refraining from false speech is obligatory. Hence He said, **“Do not try to excuse yourselves...”** The third issue: His saying, **“you have disbelieved after having believed,”** proves numerous regulations: 1) How is mocking the religion disbelief in Allāh? Mockery connotes demeaning something and thinking light of it whereas the corner-stone of faith is veneration of Allāh, Most High, as much as possible. Combining these two matters is impossible. 2) It proves the fallacy of those who say that disbelief can only occur with respect to deeds of the heart. 3) It proves that the words they uttered were, in reality, disbelief, even if they were hypocrites beforehand. It proves that disbelief can renew itself in a disbeliever as he passes through state after state. 4) It proves that disbelief occurred after they had been believers. However, someone could ask, ‘These people were hypocrites, so how can it be correct to refer to them in this way?’ We say that al-Ḥasan said, ‘The meaning is that you have disbelieved after your faith which you have outwardly displayed.’ Others said, ‘Your disbelief has become apparent to the believers after they had previously thought you Muslims.’ Both these opinions are close in meaning.

¹¹ as stated by Baghawī, Rāzī, and others in their respective commentaries. Their reasoning was that the people who said this were hypocrites and were, as such, already disbelievers and not believers. Cf. Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma`ānī*.

¹² Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū` Fatāwā*, vol. 7, pg. 272. He continues by saying on pp. 274-275, ‘His saying, **“If you ask them they will say, ‘We were only joking and playing around,’”** proves that they admitted to their doing it and then tried to make excuses. This is why it was said, **“Do not try to excuse yourselves, you have disbelieved after having believed. If one group of you is pardoned, another group will be punished for being evildoers.”** This proves that they themselves did not think they had done anything warranting disbelief, rather they thought it was not disbelief. Therefore, He explained that mocking Allāh, His Signs, and His Messenger is disbelief whereby a person becomes a disbeliever after having believed, this then proves that they did in fact have a weak faith. Then they committed this prohibited act, which they knew to be prohibited but did not think was disbelief, but it was disbelief and they became disbelievers as a result even though they did not believe what they did was permissible. It is in a similar vein that more than one of the Salaf explained the parable of the hypocrites propounded in Sūrah al-Baqarah to mean that they saw and then became blind, that they knew and then rejected, that they believed and then disbelieved.’

¹³ *al-Nūr* (24): 47-51

¹⁴ Bukhārī, vol. 1, pg. 109, as a *ta`līq* report. The full isnād was provided by ibn Abī Khaythamah and al-Marwazī, *Kitāb al-Īmān* as stated by ibn Ḥajr, *Fath*, vol. 1, pg. 110

¹⁵ Shaykh `Uthmān al-Tamīmī, *Fath al-Ḥamīd*, said, ‘This hypocrite described them with the qualities of his brother hypocrites. It is the hypocrites who are most suited to these qualities and they are the most deserving of being called liars as lying is integral to their hypocrisy. They are people beset with doubts and given to lying; Allāh, Most High, says, “*Allāh bears witness that the hypocrites are liars.*” They are cowards and this is a trait inherent in them, “*If they had gone out amongst you, they would have added nothing to you but confusion*”, “*They imagine every cry to be against them*”, “*...showing off to people, and only remembering Allāh a very little. They vacillate between the two – not joining these or joining those.*”^{*} They have taken the devils as friends and protectors in place of Allāh, all the while craving wealth and riches.’

* Verses: *al-Munāfiqūn* (63): 1, *al-Tawbah* (9): 47, *al-Munāfiqūn* (63): 4, *al-Nisā’* (4): 142-143 respectively.

¹⁶ Shaykh `Uthmān al-Tamīmī, *Fath al-Ḥamīd*, said, ‘This proves that referring matters such as these to the leader is not counted as *namīmah*, or tale carrying, rather it is a display of sincerity to the Muslims. This is done to safeguard their religious and worldly life from ruin by those who are not from amongst them, while they are blissfully unaware. Tale-carrying or backbiting only happens in the case that a Muslim slips or errs for, in this case, it is upon his brother to rectify his slip through sincere advice and to conceal it; unless the sinner publicly broadcasts the sin in which he can be openly reprimanded.’

Shaykh Ḥamid ibn Muḥammad, *Fathu’llāh al-Ḥamīd*, said, ‘The difference between the two is that the person giving sincere advice does not want to split the Muslims or cause dissention amongst those who love each other, rather he wishes to give prominence to the truth and curb falsehood by way of sincerity to Allāh, His Messenger, and His religion. The tale-carrier, on the other hand, wants to cause splitting and dissention out of envy and transgression. Therefore the actual difference between the two is based around intention and purpose.’

Shaykh Sulaymān, *Taysīr al-`Azīz*, said, ‘This shows that one should immediately reject evil and be severe with the hypocrites. It also shows the permissibility of describing a person as a hypocrite if he says or does something that proves this. “*I will inform the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ*,” the conveyance of information in such cases is not regarded to be backbiting, *ghībah*, or tale-carrying, *namīmah*. Indeed this case is an example of sincerity to Allāh and His Messenger. As such it is necessary to differentiate backbiting and tale-carrying from sincerity to Allāh and His Messenger. Mentioning the deeds of the hypocrites and sinners to the people of authority in order to rebuke and restrain them, and to have the laws of the Sharī`ah applied on them, is not regarded to be backbiting or tale-carrying. “*But found that (verses of the) Qur`ān had already been revealed concerning the incident,*” i.e. revelation from Allāh had already come concerning what they had said. This proves the knowledge of Allāh, Glorious is He, His power and godship, and that Muḥammad is truly the Messenger of Allāh.’

¹⁷ Shaykh `Uthmān al-Tamīmī, *Fath al-Ḥamīd*, said, ‘The hypocrite spoke truthfully! It is core to their nature to speak about the private affairs of the Muslims, to violate their honour, and to joke about it unceasingly. This is the consequence of a disease that has encompassed their hearts which they are no longer able to conceal; as such, when they are lax or remiss, it must appear on their facial expressions or upon their tongues. He then went on to present his excuse by saying, “*speaking as riders do amongst themselves to cut short the journey!*” This proves that Jihād in the way of Allāh was something they were averse to, something burdensome which they did not view as an action of worship. The only avenue of relief they could find was to do that which they loved, that which their hearts found solace and familiarity in: mocking the Muslims and their leaders. They would relish it, they would not get tired of it, and it would make the journey pass quicker.’

¹⁸ Shaykh Sulaymān, *Taysīr al-`Azīz*, said, ‘This shows that one can be harsh to the enemies of Allāh and pay them no heed. It also shows that one should just stick to the revealed text and turn away from arguing with the people of falsehood. It also shows that there are some excuses that are just unacceptable.’