

Question and answer: Sitting with those committing sin

By

Question: The sinner like the one who leaves his prayer or the one who engages in Ribaa transactions, or the one who drinks alcohol, or belongs to non-Islamic groups etc. is it permissible to sit and deal with them?

Answer - It has come in Surah Al-An'am (a Meccan Surah) "And when thou seest those who meddle with Our revelations, withdraw from them until they meddle with another topic. And if the devil cause thee to forget, sit not, after the remembrance, with the congregation of wrong doers." [TMQ Al-An'am: 68] This address is to the messenger of Allah (saws) and every single individual in the Ummah as an address to the prophet is an address to the Ummah. And the verse says that a Muslim does not sit in a sitting where the act of lying against the verses of Allah (swt) or ridiculing the verses of Allah (swt) occurs.

Now if this occurs the Muslim must leave the sitting as long as this disobedience is taking place. If the Muslim forgets and then remembers, that he is in a sitting where these acts are being committed, then he must leave straight away and not wait one second. The verse says the objective behind leaving the sitting is so the Muslim can declare outright his rejection to the act being committed and the stance these people hold, so that they can fear Allah (swt). This verse was revealed in Mecca when the Muslims were not ordered yet to remove the Munkar (evil) by the hand. Until Allah (swt) revealed "*Already has he sent you word in the book, that when ye hear the signs of God held in defiance and ridicule, ye are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme: if ye did, ye would be like them*" [TMQ An-Nisa: 140].

This verse is from Surah An-Nisa is from the first verses revealed in Medina. It says that if you are committing this prohibited act after it has reached you, and were pleased in sitting with them in the place that people reject and ridicule the verses of Allah (swt), and you consented then you are like them in disobedience as Allah (swt) said "*ye would be like them* "

This verse despite being revealed in Medina itself, when the Muslims had a state, does not constitute an order to remove the Munkar by hand. From this basis it does not contain more than what the Meccan Surah Al-An'am contains. Ibn-Kathir placed a title based on the contents of the verse stating "**whoever does not remove the Munkar then let him remove himself from it**". This is what the saying of the messenger of Allah (saws) means "**Whoever believes in Allah and the Day of Judgment then let him not sit on a table in which wine is passed upon it**". Until then sitting, eating, drinking and so on with the sinner was only prohibited when he was committing the sin. Then Allah (swt) revealed "*They restrained not one another from the wickedness they did. Verily evil was that they used to do! Thou seest many of them making friends with those who disbelieve. surely ill for them is that which they themselves send on before them : that Allah will be wroth with them and in the doom they will abide.*" and this verse is from Surah Al-Maidah and is from the last verses that was revealed in the Qur'aan. Abdullah Ibn Mas'ood narrates that the messenger of Allah (saws) said: "A man from the children of Israel if he saw his brother upon sin he would forbid him as an admonishment, until it was the next day it would not have stopped him from what he saw that he eat and mix and associate with him" and in another narration "he drinks with him. " "And when Allah (swt) saw from them this. Allah (swt) struck their hearts together and cursed them upon the

tongues of their prophets Dawud and 'Isaah son of Maryam because of their disobedience and they used to transgress. " Until he (saws) said "Nay, by Allah, you have to enjoin the good and forbid the wrong, and to hold against the hand of the tyrant, and to force him on the truth and restrict him to the truth, otherwise Allah will strike the hearts of some of you against others, then He will curse you as He cursed them."

The verse in Surah Al-Maidah did not abrogate the verse in Surah Al-An'am or Surah An-Nisa but rather it contained new rulings that was clarified by the Ahadith of the messenger of Allah (saws). The new ruling now is the obligation of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong and the obligation of the removal of the Munkar by hand if one is able to do so. Before that the obligation was staying away from the Munkar when it was being committed. Here the question is raised: Is it permissible to sit with the sinner and eat and drink with him during the periods he is not committing the sin, or is this forbidden until he repents? Some scholars said: It is not permissible to sit with the sinner (and the Fasiq that commits his sin openly) when he is committing the sin or when he is not committing the sin, until he repents.

This opinion necessitates that the verse in Surah Al-Maidah abrogated the verses in Surah AL-An'am and Surah An-Nisa. But this is not totally correct, because the claimed abrogated verses are Muhkam i.e. the verse in Suarh Al-Maidah cannot abrogate them. As for the Ahadith then they cannot abrogate the Qur'aan. Hence it is necessary we gather between the evidences. Gathering the evidences would be by taking the Ahadith of sitting, and drinking and eating as the situations in which the one who commits the sin is actually involved in the action, or in the situations that may be understood as consent and acceptance of the disobedience. For example the verse from Surah al-An'am and the verse of Surah An-Nisa mentions the situation of the mockery of the verses of Allah (swt), and the Hadith mentioned the situation when wine is present on a table. An example of this is if a Muslim would be present at a sitting where there is backbiting, slander and so on taking place. As for the situation when a Muslim e.g. leaves his prayer, engages in Riba, then in this situation the Muslim cannot take that person as a close friend, because taking him as a close friend means consenting and accepting the acts of disobedience he commits. As for other transaction then it is allowed for the Muslim to deal with a sinner (and Fasiq) as long as these transactions do not lead to an indication of acceptance of the sinner, and Allah knows best.