

The First Degree

It is the most intense and the most serious: One's goal is to commit a transgression against the will of Allāh and to reach what is prohibitive, such as he makes a show of his acts of adoration, or feigns piety and godliness through many supererogatory acts of adoration. He avoids anything that may bring about people's doubt in his regard. His goal is so that people may recognize his trustworthiness, hence positions in the judicial system, or religious trusts, or wills, or whatever belongs to orphans. He will then take them and keep to himself whatever he can.

Or he may be trusted with items, so he takes them and denies having done so, thus reaching his corrupt goals in committing transgressions. One may appear in the attire of the righteous, articulating pieces of wisdom, admonishment, and reminding. Yet his goal is to look good in the eyes of a beautiful woman. Some people may attend meetings of knowledge and remembrance of the Almighty, or even of the Qur'ān, pretending they wish to listen to knowledge and to the Qur'ān while their goal is to look at women, and these pretenders are hated the most by Allāh Almighty because they made obedience to their Lord a ladder to reaching their transgression, using it as a tool, a shop, a merchandise in their sinning.

Close to these, though less in degree, is one who commits a crime of which he is accused, yet he insists on it and wants to keep the charge away from himself, so he feigns piety in order to deny the charge, such as one who denied a trust with him of which people charged him, so he offers charity with the money in order that it will be said he gives away from his money to the poor, so how can it be possible that he seizes the funds belonging to others?

The likes of such folks are many among the Muslims. Individuals may gather funds that belong to the Muslims by the millions through usury or other illegitimate transactions. One may see that instead of returning people's money to them, he offers charity with some of his money, or builds a mosque or a hospital, so that people may see that he is one who builds mosques or hospitals; therefore, how can it be possible that he stretches his hands to people's money and possessions?

Or one may be charged with having committed a sin with a woman, and Allāh, the most Exalted One, removed the covering from him and exposed him among the people. Instead of resorting to a covering

from Allāh, Praise to Him, regretting and pleading to Allāh, Who sways the hearts, to change people's attitude about him, he seeks a means through pretension, trying to cover his sin with pretension.

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