

22147 - Is it necessary in order to denounce evil that it be removed completely, or is it sufficient to reduce it

the question

If I want to denounce some evil, but we cannot remove it completely but we are able to reduce it, should we get involved for that purpose? Or should we say that we have to either remove it completely or not do anything at all?

Detailed answer

The correct view is that we have to remove evil as much as we can. Our efforts should be aimed primarily at removing it completely. If we are not able to do that, but we can reduce it or reduce some of its effects, then the basic principles of sharee'ah dictate that we should do that, especially since we are living at a time when the evildoers have the upper hand and those who seek to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil and to call people to Allaah are unable to achieve all that they want to do. We can at least reduce the effects of evil; if there is something that is difficult to remove, this is no excuse for not doing what we can. We should not give up altogether on something of which we can only do a part. Allaah does not burden any soul beyond its scope, but we have to be certain about the basic principle in this matter, which is that the daa'iyah (caller) who wants to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil should not be content with a partial solution or accept a reduction of the evil when it is possible to eradicate it completely.

Often those who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil are content to reduce the evil without striving to remove it... Like the one who tells a woman who is showing a lot of her charms to non-mahram men to cover all of that apart from the hands and face, even though he is able to tell her to observe complete hijab.

And like the one who passes by someone who is playing singing and music loud, and he tells him to turn down the sound of that evil.

And like the one who is asked to teach women or girls, and he sets down the condition that they should wear hijab and not speak in soft voices, even though he is able to demand that a screen be placed between him and them so that they can hear his voice without him seeing them.

Among the evidence concerning this matter that is mentioned in the Qur'aan is what Moosa (peace be upon him) did with the calf which the Children of Israel worshipped and were devoted to. He said:

“We will certainly burn it, and scatter its particles in the sea”

[Ta-Ha 20:97 – interpretation of the meaning]

The Sunnah is what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did with the masjid al-diraar (a mosque built by way of harming and disbelievers, cf. al-Tawbah 9:107), which had been built by the hypocrites. He ordered that it should be burned after being destroyed.

Al-Bukhaari and others narrated from the hadeeth of Ibn Mas'ood (may Allaah be pleased with him) that he said, “The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) entered Makkah on the day of the Conquest, and there were three hundred and sixty idols around the Ka'bah. He started hitting them with a stick that he had in his hand, saying, ‘Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Truth has come and falsehood can neither create nor resurrect anything.’” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari).

Another example was narrated by al-Bukhaari in his Saheeh, in the hadeeth of Jareer ibn 'Abd-Allaah al-Bajali (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said, “The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to me, ‘Won't you relieve me from Dhul-Khalasah?’ I replied, ‘Yes, (I will relieve you).’ So I went along with one hundred and fifty cavalry from the tribe of Ahmas who were skillful in riding horses. I used not to sit firmly on a horse, so I informed the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) of that, and he hit my chest with his hand till I saw the marks of his hand on my chest and he said, ‘O Allah! Make him firm and one who guides others and is guided (on the right path).’ Since

then I have never fallen from a horse. Dhul-l-Khalasah was a house in Yemen belonging to the tribe of Jath'am and Bajeelah, and in it there were idols which were worshipped, and it was called al-ka'bah." Jareer went there, burnt it with fire and destroyed it.

When Jareer came to Yemen, there was a man who used to tell fortunes and give good omens by casting arrows of divination. Someone said to him, "The messenger of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is here, is present here and if he should get hold of you, he will chop off your head." One day while the man was using them (i.e. arrows of divination), Jareer stopped there and said to him, "Break them (i.e. the arrows) and testify that None has the right to be worshipped except Allaah, or else I will chop off your head." So the man broke those arrows and testified that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah. Then Jareer sent a man called Abu Artaa'ah from the tribe of Ahmas to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to convey the good news (that Dhul-Khalasah had been destroyed). So when the messenger reached the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), he said, "O Messenger of Allaah! By Him Who sent you with the Truth, I did not come until I left it like a scabby camel." Then the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "May Allaah bless the horses of Ahmas and their men," five times.

The relevant points in this hadeeth are two: what he did to Dhul-Khalasah, and how he dealt with the one who used arrows for fortune-telling etc.

And it says in al-Fath: "This hadeeth indicates that it is prescribed in Islam to remove things by which people may be tempted, be they buildings or other things, even if it is a person, an animal or an inanimate object." (8/73)

Another example is when Khaalid ibn al-Waleed (may Allaah be pleased with him) was sent to al-'Uzza and he cut down the three gum-acacia trees and destroyed the house. When he told him what he had done, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told him that he had not done anything. He told him to go back and find that naked woman with dishevelled hair who was pouring dust on her head, and so he went back and killed her with a sword... When he came back to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)

and told him, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, “That was al-‘Uzza” (Zaad al-Ma’aad, 3/414).

It was narrated from one of the salaf that he passed by two boys who were playing in a hole in which there were pebbles with which they were playing. He blocked it up and forbade them to go there. Tafseer al-Qurtubi, 8/340

But if the one who is enjoying good and forbidding evil is unable to remove the evil completely, then he should strive to reduce it as much as possible.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said, when mentioning some of the lessons learned from the battle of Tabook, “We also learn that places of sin in which Allaah and His Messenger are disobeyed are to be burned and destroyed, as the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) burned the masjid al-diraar (a mosque built by way of harming and disbelief, cf. al-Tawbah 9:107) and commanded that it should be destroyed. This was a mosque in which prayers were offered and the name of Allaah was mentioned, but it had been built to cause harm and divide the believers, and as a refuge for the hypocrites. In the case of places of this type, the ruler has to put a stop to it, either by destroying it and burning it, or by changing its appearance and using it for a different purpose. If this was the case concerning a mosque built for harming and disbelief, then places of shirk whose custodians promote taking those inside them as rivals to Allaah are even more deserving of being destroyed. The same applies to places of sin and immorality, such as bars and places of evil. ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab burned an entire village in which wine was sold, and he burned the shop of Ruwayshid al-Thaqafi and called him Fuwaysiq. [Ruwayshid comes from a word meaning “guided” and Fuwaysiq comes from a word meaning “immoral.” – Translator]. And he burned the fortress of Sa’d in which he was hiding away from people. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) wanted to burn down the houses of those who did not attend prayers in congregation or Jumu’ah prayers; the only thing that kept him from doing that was the woman and children who were not obliged to attend these prayers, as he told us. (Zaad al-Ma’aad, 3/571-572)