

The image shows the interior of a mosque, focusing on the mihrab (prayer niche). The mihrab is a large, pointed archway filled with intricate, colorful Islamic calligraphy in gold, blue, and black. The walls and ceiling are also covered in similar calligraphic patterns. The lighting is dramatic, with bright light streaming in from the mihrab and smaller arched windows on either side, creating a strong contrast with the dark interior. The floor is covered with patterned prayer mats. The overall atmosphere is one of solemnity and reverence.

Warning Against Nifaq (Hypocrisy)

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All thanks and praises are due to Allâh Who warned against *Nifaq* and ordained the best types of conduct. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allâh; a Testimonial that saves whoever says it and adhered by its implications from the evil of the Day of Gathering (Day of Judgment). I testify that Muhammad ﷺ is the slave and Messenger of Allâh whom He sent to perfect the best types of conduct and behavior. May Allâh's peace and blessings be on Muhammad, his progeny and Companions.

O Muslims! Fear Allâh and obey Him. The Prophet ﷺ said:

يَقُولُ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: «أَرْبَعٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ كَانَ مُنَافِقًا خَالِصًا، وَمَنْ كَانَتْ فِيهِ خَصْلَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ كَانَتْ فِيهِ خَصْلَةٌ مِنَ التَّفَاقُ حَتَّى يَدْعَهَا: إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ، وَإِذَا وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ، وَإِذَا خَاصَمَ فَجَرَ، وَإِذَا عَاهَدَ غَدَرَ».

“Whoever has the following four (characteristics) will be a pure hypocrite and whoever has one of them will have one characteristic of hypocrisy unless, and until, he gives it up. They are, whenever he speaks, he tells a lie; whenever he gives a promise, he breaks it; whenever he quarrels, he behaves in a very imprudent and mean manner, and whenever he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous.” (*Al-Bukhâri and Muslim*)

An-Nifaq (hypocrisy) is a very dangerous illness and sickness, which attacks the heart and warrants Allâh's anger and torment. Every Muslim is, therefore, required to weigh himself using this *Hadith* as the scale with which he finds out if he is safe from this disease. *Nifaq* is defined as to announcing goodness and hiding evil and has two types. First, there is a *Nifaq Akbar* (biggest hypocrisy), which is hypocrisy in the creed, when a person pretends to believe in Allâh, His angels, Books, Messengers and the Hereafter. However, this person really hides disbelief in all or some of these aspects of Faith. This is the *Nifaq* that the Qur'ân admonished, considered a type of *Kufr* and

warned its people that they will be in the lowest bottoms of the Fire. Allâh described this type of hypocrite with the worst descriptions and characteristics of *Kufr* (disbelief) and mocking the religion and its people. This type of hypocrite feels inclined towards the enemies of the Islam and seeks to kindle enmity between Muslims. Among their evil characteristics is that they are misers and fools. Their outer appearance is appealing: they wear good clothes and use good words, but their inner self is wicked, full of arrogance, envy, *Riyâ'* (showing off) and various ills of the heart:

﴿ وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ وَإِنْ يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعُ لِقَوْلِهِمْ كَأَنْهُمْ حُجُبٌ مُّسْتَدَةٌ ﴿٦٣﴾
 يَحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ قَتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَزُفَكُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

“And when you look at them, their bodies please you; and when they speak, you listen to their words. They are as blocks of wood propped up. They think that every cry is against them. They are the enemies, so beware of them. May Allâh curse them! How are they denying (or deviating from) the Right Path?” (63:4)

Allâh has exposed the secrets of the hypocrites and defamed them in *Surat At-Tauba* (chapter 9) and other parts of the Qur’ân, so that Muslims are aware of their reality and thus avoid them, as well as strive against them as they do against *Mushrik* (polytheists) and *Kuffar* (disbelievers):

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَأْوَهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَيَسَّرُ لَكُمُ الْغَلَبَ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِذِي الْقُدْرَةِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٩٠﴾

“O Prophet (Muhammad ﷺ)! Strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be harsh against them, their abode is Hell, — and worst indeed is that destination.” (9:73)

O Allâh’s slaves! This is the first type of *Nifaq* and these are the characteristics of its people.

The second type of *Nifaq* is *An-Nifaq Al-‘Amali* (practical hypocrisy). that involves showing goodness and hiding treachery and betrayal. This is the type described in the *Hadith* we mentioned. Even though

this type of hypocrisy does not annul the religion, it is still a path that directs to the greater hypocrisy, *Kufr* and all types of evil. The essence of this type is described in the Prophet's *Hadith*. For instance, the Prophet ﷺ said that when people of this type speak, they lie and invent false statements. They sometime relate whatever falsehood they invent to Allâh and His Messenger ﷺ.

﴿ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ﴾

“And who does more wrong than the one who invents a lie against Allâh.” (61:7)

Also the Prophet ﷺ said:

قَالَ ﷺ: «مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَلَيْتَبَوَّأَ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ» .

“Whoever lies on me intentionally, let him take his seat in the Fire.”

Inventing a lie against Allâh and His Messenger ﷺ pertains to claiming that a certain matter is allowed or disallowed, without evidence from Allâh and His Messenger ﷺ that supports this claim. This type includes inventing stories and relating them to Allâh. Those who do this will degrade their level from the grade of truthful ones to the low ranks of liars. Persisting in lying will lead to sin, and sin leads to the Fire. Therefore, do not belittle the danger of lying, O Muslims, for minute lying leads to taking the habit of lying often. Those who lie often will be known to people by this characteristic! Hold to the truth, for those who do so will save themselves, just as Allâh said:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴾

“O you who believe! Be afraid of Allâh, and be with those who are true (in words and deeds).” (9:119)

And:

﴿ هَذَا يَوْمٌ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ ﴾

“This is a Day (i.e., Day of Resurrection) on which the truthful will profit from their truth.” (5:119)

The second characteristic of practical hypocrisy described in the *Hadith* is that when this person is entrusted, they often breach the trust. If he is entrusted with money, secrets or any other rights of other people, he will not protect these rights or secrets. They either ignore taking care of these rights, or devour them and deny they ever had possession of them. They also expose the secrets they were entrusted with, and if they were entrusted with a job, they would take bribes and dimer and favors in return for doing the job they were entrusted to do and fulfill!

The third type of practical hypocrisy entails betraying the covenants they conduct between them and Allâh, and between them and other people. Therefore, they do not preserve the terms of treaties and covenants, in contradiction to what Allâh has ordained when He said:

﴿ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا ﴾

“And fulfill (every) covenant. Verily, the covenant will be questioned about.” (17:34)

And:

﴿ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ ﴾

“And fulfil the Covenant of Allâh when you have covenanted.” (16:91)

Betraying covenants is disallowed even if they were conducted with disbelievers. Allâh has ordained that covenants be kept even with the *Kuffar*, as long as the *Kuffar* do not break the terms of their treaties with Muslims. So what about one’s treaties and covenants with Muslims, such as their pledge of allegiance to Muslim leaders? Such is the case with all transactions and contracts between Muslims. The Prophet ﷺ said:

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: «لِكُلِّ غَادِرٍ لَوَاءٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيُقَالُ هَذِهِ غُدْرَةُ فُلَانٍ».

“A flag will be raised for every betraying person on the Day of Resurrection, and it will be declared, ‘This is the betrayal of so-and-so.’”

Among the characteristics of hypocrites is that when a dispute arises between them and other Muslims, they go to extremes and do not hesitate to illegally acquire other people's rights and property. They become the most quarrelsome of people and revert to wicked ways and means to consume other people's rights, including forging documents, vowing while lying and using false testimony (including buying witnesses). If this person is influential, he will use his influence to defend falsehood, so that people will think it is true, and portray truth as being false. This, indeed, is one of the worst types of evil actions and the meanest of the characteristics of hypocrites.

Allâh's slaves! Those who acquire all these evil characteristics: lying in the speech, breaching trusts, betraying covenants and treaties and being imprudent and quarrelsome when disputes arise, will not have much reserve of *Imân* left with them. In this case, one will become a pure hypocrite, who has succumbed to dangerous illnesses that, if gather in a body, will bring it utter destruction and demise. Whoever has one or more of these characteristics will have mixed qualities of Faith with some characteristics of hypocrisy. If these evil manners remain with the believer, they might destroy whatever is left of his or her *Imân*. This is because the ills of hypocrisy are just like the dangerous diseases that attack the body and should be treated and repelled at once. Otherwise, the disease will lead the body to its demise. But if one repents to Allâh and abandons the evil characteristic of hypocrisy he has acquired, replacing it with the qualities of Faith of the opposite kind, he or she will be cured from this illness, and his Faith will almost reach the level of perfection. This is, and should be the quality of the Muslims.

This *Hadith* encourages Muslims to repent from *Nifaq* (hypocrisy) and from the characteristics of *Nifaq*, all the while adhering by and acquiring the qualities of truthful believers. The outward appearance of the faithful believer is required to conform with his or her inwardness. Muslims are required to be sincere and truthful in statement and action, in all conditions and under all circumstances. This way, they will become a good example for the believer who values his Faith, protects

his religion by saying the truth, preserves the trust, fulfills his covenants, keeps his promise and is fair even when he disputes with others.

O Allâh's slaves! *An-Nifaq Al-Akbar*, (major hypocrisy) flourishes when Muslims are strong because hypocrites fear declaring their true beliefs in this case. Yet, they wish to live with Muslims and seek protection for their life and property. They thus declare that they are Muslims outwardly, even though their hearts conceal *Kufr*. They also await any chance to hurt Muslims and conspire against them. This type of hypocrisy cannot and does not occur by Muslims.

As for *An-Nifaq Al-Asghar* (minor hypocrisy), it might occur by Muslims who have weak faith. The Companions feared this type of hypocrisy for themselves, to the extent that 'Umar رضى الله عنه used to ask Hudaifah bin Al-Yaman رضى الله عنه whether he was among the hypocrites the Prophet ﷺ mentioned to Hudaifah رضى الله عنه. Al-Bukhâri narrated in the *Sahih* that Ibn Abi Mulaika said:

“I lived during the time of thirty Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, and they all feared hypocrisy for themselves.”

Al-Bukhâri also narrated that Al-Hasan said about *Nifaq*:

“None except a faithful believer fears it for himself, and none except a hypocrite feels safe from it.”

O, Allâh's slaves! This is how our *Salaf* (righteous predecessors) feared minor hypocrisy for themselves because it directs to major hypocrisy. And just as *Kufr* starts by amassing and persisting in sin, those who persist in the characteristics of hypocrisy might lose their Faith altogether, thus becoming pure hypocrites. Therefore, fear Allâh in all conditions and under all circumstances, and be truthful always:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

“Surely, Allâh is Ever an All-Watcher over you.” (4:1)

Allâh the Exalted said:

﴿لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُولُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ

الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلْئِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ وَءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَأَيْتَمَىٰ
وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى الزَّكَاةَ
وَالْمُؤْتُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ
الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿﴾

“It is not *Al-Birr* (piety, righteousness, and each and every act of obedience to Allâh) that you turn your faces towards east and (or) west (in prayers); but *Al-Birr* is (the quality of) the one who believes in Allâh, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book, the Prophets and gives his wealth, in spite of love for it, to the kinsfolk, to the orphans, and to *Al-Masâkîn* (the poor), and to the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and to set slaves free, performs *As-Salât* (*Iqâmat-as-Salât*), and gives the *Zakât*, and who fulfil their covenant when they make it, and who are patient in extreme poverty and ailment (disease) and at the time of fighting (during the battles). Such are the people of the truth and they are *Al-Muttaqûn*.” (2:177)

May Allâh direct us and you to the blessings of the Glorious Qur’ân and benefit us and you with whatever is in it of the *Âyat* and Wise *Dhikr*. I say this and ask Allâh the Great, and the Most Honored for forgiveness for me, you and all Muslims for every sin. Invoke Him for forgiveness, for He is the Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.¹

¹ *Al-Khutab Al-Minbariyyah*, by Shaikh Salih Al-Fozan, vol 1, p. 292