**Watch Your Tongue - Nouman Ali Khan**

Recites Surah Al-Hujuraat, ayaat: 11

‘Ya aiyuhal lazina aamanu la yaskhar khaw mumin khawmin asayaa ayyakunu khairaan minhum wala nisaaum min nisaain aasaa ayyakunna khairaan min hunn wala talmizuu anfusakum wala tanabazuu bilalkhaab beesal ismu alfusukhu baadal emaan wa mallum yatub faoolaaeka humuzzalimoon.’ (11)

I wanted to take this few moment to share with you a reminder that I myself need and I think most of us need in regards to guarding and respecting the gift Allah has given us, OUR TONGUES. Allah hu zowjal when He revealed the Quran, He mentions some of His most exquisite Mercies and Gifts, so He said: ‘Ar-Rahman, Ar arramal Quran’. One of the points to ponder about those Ayaats in Surat Ar-Rahman is that He mentions not just a name that depicts His Mercy, that a name that depicts His extreme Mercy. Ar-Rahmaan, the unimaginably Merciful. The one being incredibly Merciful. Arramal Quran, He thought the Quran. And Quran of course if the Speech of Allah. The speech of Allah that when He’s revealed it, its suppose to be in our tongues, we’re suppose to remind each other with it, so the words we uttered from our mouths are suppose to actually be a means to penetrating somebody else’s heart. Then He says, ‘Qalaqar Insaan’, He created the human being then He uses the same word ‘Al-lamma’, which is amazing, He says’ Al-lammar Quran’, He thought the Quran, He thought His speech and then I’ll skip over an ayaat and you’ll find ‘Al- lamma hur Bayaan’, He thought the human beings speech. Just like He said HE thought human beings Quran he thought human being speech. The ability to speak is an incredible gift from Allah and it’s an honor from Allah. And what we’re learning from those ayaat is that, the best use of your speech is to remember Allah by the words He thought you. Your speech in any matter should be inspired by the speech Allah thought you, that the one He’s honored us with His Quran.

Now, we’re all humans and we make mistakes. And we sometime don’t realize the value of things that we have, specially our tongues. We say things, we make comments and you know social settings among family and friends and things like that and completely cross the line sometimess that we don’t realize the magnitude of that problem. And Because Allah hu Zojar takes the time to mention this particular problem in the Quran, it should make us appreciate that this is not a light matter.

In this regard, I just want to share this reminder from Surat Al-Hujuraat, just one ayaat, this is ayaat number 11. It is addressed to those who believe, and the first thing Allah says,’ Ya aiyuhal lazina aamanu la yaskhar khaw mumin khawmin’,: those of you who believe don’t let any group among you any nation, which implies any group and collectivity poke fun in any other. And ‘Sakheera’ or ‘Suhkhriya’ in Arabic doesn’t just mean to poke fun because the word for that is ‘Istahza’ also, but the most comprehensive word in Arabic ‘Suhkhriya’ actually means to be sarcastic also. Don’t be sarcastic against each other. Now making fun of someone and being sarcastic against someone, at lot of times specially now a day’s its considered as a sign of Intelligence …’that guy is really funny’, ‘ that guy makes a lot of funny jokes’ or ‘he makes lot of sarcastic remarks that are like a rapid fire, they come out of him one after another’. And when people around you laugh at your joke, it’s pretty much an ego boost, so you come up with a next disc or a next sarcastic remark or the next inappropriate joke and you kinda feed of the laughter of others, and you get caught up with it. And Allah hu zojar is telling us in this Surah that This is something that can take away the very fabric of brotherhood that we enjoy among each other. Allah hu zojar, says right before this ayaat says, Believers are nothing but brothers among each other so make reconciliation among your brothers. And have the ‘Takwa’ of Allah so you are shown Mercy. Be conscious, aware and in awe of Allah so you maybe shown Mercy.

The previous Ayaat says about us making reconciliation among each other, and the very next ayaat is saying watch the way you speak to each other. Don’t be sarcastic with each other. Don’t make insulting comments in the name of humor against each other. You know very casual to say or talk about how short someone is or how ugly they are or how they dress or what kind of car they drive or what school they go to or what kinda job they have. It’s very easy to pick on someone’s flaws and make them the point of ridicule.

Then Allah says,’ asayaa ayyakunu khairaan minhum’: May be the group made fun off is better than the group making fun . Now making fun of by whose perspective, now obviously, when you are making fun of someone there is an already underlined assumption, conscious or sub conscious that you are better than them, that’s why you are making fun of them, they are the object of your ridicule. You know, you wouldn’t take someone who you are convinced deserves more respect than you do or is above you in anyway, they wouldn’t be the point of ridicule for you, so obviously there is a sense of superiority you have. And Allah is saying that as far as HE’s concerned the group you are making fun of is better. And here just a note about our society in general, something that has become a part of comedy and entertainment, you know a comic or a standup comic, cracks a lot of jokes and things like that, one of their sellers is to mock another ethnicity and to imitate an accent, or make fun of what kind of food that ethnicity likes to eat, dress or what kind of weird things they say among each other, how they drive they cars or how cheap they are or how much they love spicy food or what kinda hot tempers they have, so they pick up some flaw of some ethnicity and make that the object of ridicule, which makes this ayaat even more alive. ‘la yaskhar khawmun min khawmin’, not any group making fun of any other group, maybe the group you are making fun of is better than you as far as Allah is concerned that is to say. ‘wala nisaun wa Min nisain, which is interesting, neither should women be making fun of other women. In other words Allah mentions nations which include men and women but Allah specifically highlighted Women doing so. And so what is being told here, because of the word ‘Suhkhriya’ is the way women do this is very different then the way men do it. So ‘wala nisaun min nisain aasaa ayyakunna khairaan min hunn ‘, So maybe the one’s made fun of are better than the one’s poking fun of them. Then He says, ‘wala talmizuu an fusakum’, this ayaat this all ONE ayaat is about not violating the rights of your tongue, this beautiful thing Allah has given you. ‘wala talmizu an fusakum’, ’lammzz’ in Arabic could be ‘kadyakun bir isharaah’, its criticizing someone either by means of bodily gesture or by means of your eyes like rolling your eyes or by sign, by taking a deep breath. Or by snicker or comment made under your breath, this is not my definition this is the definition of ancient lexicon telling us what ‘lammaz’ means, it’s a snicker or comment made under your breath just so they heard you say something but they don’t quite know what you said. And when you ask them ‘what?’ they say ‘nothing!, I didn’t say anything’, you know, that suttle kind of criticism or undermining somebody’s speech or demining someone or condescending towards someone that’s not even captured in speech. Sometimes you can insult someone without saying a single word and Allah knows that so he uses the word ‘wala talmizu an fusakum’. And because the ayaat is talking about believers you know whats amazing is that among the many things that’s amazing about this ayaat is that, Allah doesn’t says don’t make this kind of sarcasting, condescending, critical type of gesture to others. He says ‘Anfusakum’, to yourself!. In other words, if you do this to a believer, you are they-they are you, you are one people, you are one nation. So who you are really making fun of is actually your own self. And the other implication here is that when someone does this kinda thing, the only one they are successfully insulting is they own dignity. The only one they are really harming is they own sense of self worth. ‘wala talmizu an fusakum’, thats a really powerful statement. DON’T DO IT.

Allah hu aalum, I would even add the secret gesture now a days is to send someone a text message about how stupid somebody sounds or how ugly they look or take a picture and post it up on a social networking site about how ridiculous somebody are, just an act of embarrassing them. In ancient time the act of embarrassing someone could have been a gesture of a hand or with a rolling of an eye or just a deep breath or some remarks spread about them. Now it takes modern forms. Just because it’s taken a modern form doesn’t make it permissible, it’s the same crime. So ‘wala talmizu an fusakum’ then he says, ‘wala tanabazuu bilalkhaab’, and don’t call each other out by nick names and ‘nabaza’ is used in Arabic, it’s the larger form of the word, but it’s to try to come up with artificial nick names against each other, that you are trying to make it stick on them and your trying to make sure everybody around them calls them that and they themselves are hurt and insulted by it. So what happens is when you call someone with a nick name, in response they call you by a nick name, they’ll come up with something else for you and obviously they are doing this as an act of retaliation and even thought your just friends and even thought you don’t think it’s a big deal, But some kind of animosity is planted inside the heart. There is some offence taken and you know when that’s really gonna come out, maybe it won’t come out now, maybe your friend doesn’t want to get things ugly between you, so he/she doesn’t say anything when you call them a nasty nickname or an insulting nickname, commenting about they weight or height or skin color or accent or whatever it maybe, you know, or they intelligence even, But it will come out on judgment day. When that person is in deficiency of good deeds and they could use whatever they could get, they’ll come out after they best friends and say ‘you used to call me these nasty nicknames. And for everything you used to call me a nasty nickname I’ll like to get compensated.’ So why doesn’t he/she takes away some sins of mine for each time they used that word against me, they might make that kinda deal, watch out! ‘coz they’re friends with you now, we’re friends now, but that’s not the case on judgment day, when a mother forgets her child, you’re not gonna remember your friends. The day Allah describes as a day a person runs away from his own brother, his wife he runs away from, that he would live with her forever and ever, he would never get away from her, he loved her, he’s running away from her on judgment day, what do you think your friends are gonna care that day, that this might hurt your feelings, they don’t want to take away from your good deeds. Now days you might say that ‘I don’t want to say anything, it might hurt his feelings.’ That day you’re not gonna care about anyybody’s feelings but your own. So watch out from making those offensive comments and those offensive gestures. wala tanabazuu bilalkhaab : Don’t call each other by nicknames.

‘ beesal ismu alfusukhu baadal emaan’, The ayaat keeps dropping treasure after treasures. It’s all one ayaat, He says,’ ismu alfusukh’, the horribly corrupt word, the word ‘ismu’ means noun or name. The word itself is utterly despicable, how terrible it is ‘badal imaan’, after you have faith. In other words when a person has Imaan, then bad language, which all of this was describing was the bad language. On top of that by using ‘beesal ismual fusukh’,Allah is now even including cuss words and foul language, you know filthy language. All of this together, this language, Allah says how terrible this can be, it’s absolutely nasty thing to have, ‘Once You Have Imaan’. Once faith is there. You know what that suggest, if you’re a person and I’m a person, we don’t care that we curse, it just rolls out of our tongues and we don’t care if we make snickering comments about someone and filthy language weather spelled out exactly as the bleeped out word it and you make a variation of the spelling and say ‘no, no I didn’t use the bad word, I used the closely spelled word that sounds like it, to play word games,’ you know, Even though your intent is clearly known. Then You know what that suggest that FAITH isn’t there. Because once Imaan is there these things are ugly to you despicable to you. You wouldn’t even want to go near them. ‘ beesal ismu alfusukhu baadal emaan’And in the end of this if you realize that maybe my faith is hurt, maybe I haven’t cried in Salah forever and ever and maybe I haven’t remembered Allah and thanked Him. And maybe you realized that your real disease is nothing but lack of controlling your tongue, the more filthy words you use the blacker your heart gets and you can’t remember Allah in a healthy way. But maybe even if you realize it now, then NOW is the time you make ‘TAWBA’. Now immediately the time you say,’ no, I’m not going to do this again. I’m going to watch my tongue. I’m going to become a better person.’

So Allah says in the end of this Ayaat, what an amazing way to end this ayaat,’ wa mallum yatub faoolaaeka humuzzalimoon.’ ‘and whoever didn’t repent, then those are THE wrong doers in fact, those in fact are THE WRONG DOERS. In other words, if you come at THIS point of the Ayaat where once you have faith these things should be terrible to you already and you should realize that this is a detriment to your faith itself the natural consequence of this is that YOU SHOULD BE REPENTING and walking away from these things and apologizing to Allah and all those people you offended, this is part of your Tawba.

And if you fail to do so and the only kind of people who fail to do so are those who don’t value their Imaan, really they don’t have value for their faith, so what should they be called but ‘Zaalimuun’, the wrong doers. They are the ultimate wrong doers, they do not realize the weight of that crime.

I pray that the I and you are able to watch our tongues in public and in private, and are able to stay away from offensive comments and remarks and are able to say things that actually cause love and unity and courtesy among each other. Our words don’t become a means to just building ill feelings towards each other, now and specially, Inshallah, it doesn’t come out in its nasty form on the judgment day!