

498974 - Does committing sin with one's friends come under the heading of committing sin openly?

the question

Does committing a minor sin with other people come under the heading of committing sin openly?

Summary of answer

If someone commits sin with his friends, it may come under the heading of committing sin openly or it may not. That depends on the intention, aim and motive.

Detailed answer

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: "All of my ummah will be safe, except those who commit sin openly, and it is part of committing sin openly for a man to do something at night, then in the morning when his Lord has concealed him, he says: O So and so, I did such and such last night, when his Lord had concealed him all night, but in the morning he discloses that which Allah had concealed for him." Narrated by al-Bukhari (6069) and Muslim (2990).

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Regarding the words "All of my ummah will be safe [mu'afa]", the word 'afiyah [translated here as "safe"] either means that Allah will pardon him, or that Allah will grant him safety and grant others safety from him." (*Fath al-Bari* 10/486).

The one who commits sin openly is the one who makes no attempt to conceal his sin.

Ibn al-Athir (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "All of my ummah will be safe, except those who commit sin openly" – this refers to those who sin openly, making no attempt to conceal it,

and they disclose what Allah had concealed of it for them, so they speak openly of it."(*An-Nihayah fi Gharib al-Hadith* 1/321).

This hadith is general in meaning and is not limited to openly committing acts that are regarded as major sins. It is to be understood in general terms, therefore it forbids openly committing minor sins just as it forbids openly committing major sins.

As openly committing sin may include speaking of it and telling others about it, it also includes committing sinful acts in front of other people.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“All of my ummah will be safe (mu‘afa)” means that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has pardoned them.

“except those who commit sin openly” – those who commit sin openly are those who openly disobey Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. They may be divided into two categories:

The first category refers to one who commits sin openly, so he does it in front of other people whilst they are looking on. Undoubtedly he is not safe, because he has brought trouble upon himself and has brought it upon other people too [because they may imitate him].

As for his bringing trouble upon himself, that is because he wronged himself when he disobeyed Allah and His Messenger, and everyone who disobeys Allah and His Messenger is wronging himself...

As for his bringing trouble upon others, that is because if people see him committing sin, that action will become insignificant in their minds, and they may do the same as him.

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon himself) said: “Whoever sets a bad precedent in Islam, upon him will be the burden of that sin and a burden like that of those who commit that sin until the Day of Resurrection.”

This is a type of committing sin openly which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not mention, because the matter is clear.

But he did mention something else, which may not be clear to some people, as he said: “It is part of committing sin openly for a man to commit an evil action at night, and Allah conceals it for him” – or he does that in his house, and Allah conceals it for him and does not let anyone know about it. If he were to repent from it privately, between him and his Lord, that would be better for him, but if he gets up in the morning and mixes with people, and says: I did such and such last night, and I did such and such, and I did such and such, then he will not be safe, for Allah concealed him, but in the morning he exposed his deeds... Therefore he is not one of those who will be safe, because he is one of those who commit sin openly.” (*Sharh Riyadh as-Salihin*, 3/16-17).

If a person commits sin with others, such as his companions and friends, then he may undoubtedly come under the heading of committing sin openly, if the doer does that deed openly, without caring and without accepting the concealment of Allah, even if the sin is something that could not happen except with other people, such as backbiting and spreading malicious gossip.

The Islamic principle is that matters are to be judged on the basis of the purpose and intention behind them.

That is because the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Deeds are but by intentions and each man will have but that which he intended.” Narrated by al-Bukhari (1) and Muslim (1907).

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: What matters is aims and purposes when one says and does anything, because if we say something, then say something else, changing the order of the words but the meaning remains the same, then both are subject to the same ruling. If the words are similar but the meanings are different, then they are subject to different rulings. The same applies to deeds. The one who reflects properly on Islamic teachings will undoubtedly understand that what is said above is sound.” (*I’lam al-Muwaqqi’in* 4/552).

So if the doer did not intend to display recklessness and carelessness by committing sin in front of people, and he did not intend to show audacity by sinning openly – rather it was a mistake

that he made when he was among his friends, then what appears to be the case is that this does not come under the heading of committing sin openly because of which the doer will be deprived of safety and pardon, because he did not do that deliberately.

And Allah knows best.