

Surah 4. An-Nisaa

Asad: NO GOOD comes, as a rule, out of secret confabulations - saving such as are devoted to enjoining charity, or equitable dealings, or setting things to rights between people:¹³⁸ and unto him who does this out of a longing for God's goodly acceptance We shall in time grant a mighty reward.

Malik: There is no virtue in most of the secret counsels of the people; it is, however, good if one secretly enjoins charity, kindness, and reconciliation among people; the one who does this to please Allah, will soon be given a mighty reward.

Pickthall: There is no good in much of their secret conferences save (in) him who enjoineth alms giving and kindness and peace making among the people. Whoso doeth that, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, We shall bestow on him a vast reward.

Yusuf Ali: In most of their secret talks there is no good: but if one exhorts to a deed of charity or justice or conciliation between men (secrecy is permissible): to him who does this seeking the good pleasure of Allah We shall soon give a reward of the highest (value).⁶²⁵

Transliteration: La khayra fee katheerin min najwahum illa man amara bi sadaqatin aw maAAroofin aw islahin bayna alnnasi waman yafAAal thalika ibtighaa mardati Allahi fasawfa nuteehi ajran AAathheeman
Khattab:

There is no good in most of their secret talks—except those encouraging charity, kindness, or reconciliation between people. And whoever does this seeking Allah's pleasure, We will grant them a great reward.

Author Comments

138 - Lit., "There is no good in much of their secret confabulation (najwa) - excepting him who enjoins...", etc. Thus, secret talks aiming at positive, beneficial ends - for instance, peace negotiations between states or communities - are excepted from the disapproval of "secret confabulations" because premature publicity may sometimes be prejudicial to the achievement of those ends or may (especially in cases where charity is involved) hurt the feelings of the people concerned.

625 - Usually secrecy is for evil ends, or from questionable motives, or because the person seeking secrecy is ashamed of himself and knows that if his acts or motives became known, he would make himself odious. Islam therefore disapproves of secrecy and loves and enjoins openness in all consultations and doings. But there are three things in which secrecy is permissible, and indeed laudable, provided the motive be purely unselfish, to earn "the good pleasure of Allah": (1) if you are doing a deed of charity or beneficence, whether in giving material things or in helping in moral, intellectual, or spiritual matters; here publicity may not be agreeable to the recipient of your beneficence, and you have to think of his feelings; (2) where an unpleasant act of justice or correction has to be done; this should be done, but there is no virtue in publishing it abroad and causing humiliation to some parties or adding to their humiliation by publicity; (3) where there is a delicate question of conciliating parties to a quarrel; they may be very touchy

about publicity but quite amenable to the influence of a man acting in private.

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