

Khutbah: Qala ‘Azza wa Jall (read the verse below). Understanding the realities regarding **Honor** (‘izzah) and **Reputation** (sum‘ah) and the difference between the two is highly significant because of their the impact in our lives— especially for Muslims in contexts where identity, dignity, and social pressure are real challenges for minorities, youth, professionals, and incarcerated Muslims. There are some key reasons to focus on this topic. The verse in Suratul Fatir 35:10 itself directly distinguishes TRUE honor from FALSE reputation. Muslims today face intense pressure to “look good” more than to “be good.” The verse teaches that deeds must be sincere — not done for image or applause. It addresses a major moral crisis: confusion between “reputation” and “honor.” It helps remove hypocrisy (nifāq) and performative goodness. It offers healing to those whose reputation has been damaged. It helps build a healthier Muslim community.

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ وَالَّذِينَ يَمْكُرُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَكْرُ أُولَئِكَ هُوَ يَبُورُ (١٠)

"Whoever desires honor (‘izzah), then to Allah belongs all honor. To Him ascends good speech, and righteous action raises it. But those who plot evil deeds will have a severe punishment, and their plotting will perish."(Fatir 35:10)

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Islam, today we reflect on a verse that speaks directly to our hearts—those seeking dignity, redemption, and a way back to Allah. Allah reminds us where real honor comes from and how every believer, no matter their condition, can rise in His sight.

1. True Honor Comes Only from Allah

Allah says: *"Whoever desires honor, then to Allah belongs all honor."*

People search for dignity—in family, society, status, reputation, or power. Many people end up losing themselves while chasing this worldly honor.

The message this ayah carries is quite healing...Even if society judges you, even if people look down on you, even if your name has been stained, **BUT your honor with Allah is not lost.**

Tafsir References

- **Ibn Kathir** explains that those seeking honor should seek it through obedience to Allah, because honor is only with Him.
- **Al-Tabari** states: whoever wants dignity should pursue the causes of honor in Allah’s obedience, not in disobedience.
- **Al-Qurtubi** adds: honor is not from lineage, strength, or wealth, but from closeness to Allah.

On the authority of Abu Hurairah RA, The Prophet ﷺ said: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُورِكُمْ وَأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ**

"Verily Allah does not look at your outward forms nor your wealth, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds." (Muslim)

While people may judge based on the past, Allah judges based on the heart turning back to Him.

2. Good Speech Rises to Allah

Part of the ayah where Allah says: **"إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ"**

draw our attention to "good speech" (al-kalimūṭ-ṭayyib). What is it that this part of the ayah referring to?

- **Ibn Kathir said:** it refers to the shahadah, dhikr, Qur'an, and any word spoken sincerely to please Allah.
- **Qatadah said:** it is *la ilaha illa Allah*.
- **Mujahid said:** it includes supplication and remembrance.

this means: You may not have freedom, you may be even incarcerated, You may not have wealth or status, But your **words** can still rise to the heavens.

Your invocation, your Qur'an recitation, your charitable work, your repentance, your good advice to others — all of it ascends to Allah. So, the physical barriers will not stop your sincere good deeds.

3. ...and Righteous Deeds Lift The Good Speech Higher

The ayah continues: **"...and righteous action raises it." وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ**

Our scholars explained:

- Good deeds elevate good speech.
- Words without actions are incomplete.
- Actions are like the wings that lift your words to Allah, and give weight to your words.

The Prophet ﷺ said: **"The most beloved deeds to Allah are the most consistent, even if small."** (Bukhari & Muslim). So, you can build a life of honor through steady actions even small.

4. Warning: Evil Plots Destroy Their Owners

Allah says: **"Those who plot evil deeds will have a severe punishment, and their plotting will perish."**

- Backbiting, Manipulation, Scheming, Intimidating people, Stirring conflicts

These behaviors might work temporarily, but Allah promises: **they end in loss and humiliation.**

- **Ibn Kathir says:** evil plotting harms only its doer.
- **Al-Tabari says:** their schemes disappear, and they gain nothing but sin.

The Prophet ﷺ warned: **"A believer is not one who injures, curses, speaks obscenely, or is foul."** (Tirmidhi, authentic). A true Muslim avoids evil speech and evil schemes.

5. The Message of the Ayah for Your Journey of Redemption

This ayah provides a roadmap for building a new identity with Allah:

- Seek honor only from Allah: People may hold your past against you — Allah does not.
- Let your speech be pure: Speak Qur'an, du'ā', forgiveness, patience, and truth.
- Let your actions prove your sincerity: Even small, consistent improvements raise you in rank.
- Stay away from schemes and negativity: They destroy spiritual progress.
- Know that Allah can raise you higher than before: Many of the righteous in Islamic history had mistakes, yet Allah honored them because they turned back to Him.

Let's see how Reputation differs from Honor in Light of Fatir 35:10

1. Reputation *سمعة* is how people see you.

Reputation is external, fragile, and depends on the judgment of human beings. It comes from:

- People's opinions, Society's standards, Past actions, Rumors and perceptions, How well you present yourself

Reputation can rise or fall **based on things you sometimes cannot control**. A single mistake can damage it. A false accusation can ruin it. A person with pure intentions might still be misunderstood. Reputation lives **in the minds of people**—and people are changeable.

2. Honor (*'izzah*) is how Allah sees you.

Honor is internal, stable, and comes directly from Allah. Fatir 35:10 begins with: **"Whoever seeks *'izzah* (honor), then to Allah belongs all honor."**

This teaches us that: Real honor is not created by people. Real honor cannot be taken away by people. Real honor is built through a relationship with Allah. Real honor depends on *truth of heart and sincerity of action*. Honor lives **in your character, faith, and obedience**, and Allah Himself protects it.

- **Ibn Kathir:** Honor belongs to Allah alone; He grants it through obedience.
- **Qurtubi:** True honor has nothing to do with worldly status.
- **Al-Tabari:** Honor cannot be gained through sin; only Allah grants it.

3. Reputation is horizontal; honor is vertical.

- Reputation is **between you and people**. But Honor is **between you and Allah**.

This is why the verse immediately mentions: **“To Him ascends good speech, and righteous action raises it.”** Allah AWJ is teaching us the formula: **Honor is the sum of righteous words & sincere actions, *not* people’s praise, *not* public image, *not* the past.**

4. Reputation can be lost instantly; honor only increases with sincerity.

People may remember your worst mistake but Allah looks at your **latest repentance**.

A person can carry a bad reputation while having great honor with Allah— like those who repented deeply, or those judged unfairly.

Similarly, a person may have a very good public reputation but possess no honor with Allah— such as hypocrites, deceivers, or those who do good only to be seen.

The Prophet ﷺ said: **“Allah does not look at your outward forms or your wealth, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds.”** (Muslim)

5. Reputation is past-focused; honor is future-focused.

Reputation is often based on what you *did* before. Honor is built on what you *do now*.

Even someone with a dark past— and even someone sitting in a prison cell—can rise in honor with Allah through sincerity, repentance, and good deeds. But someone with a spotless reputation can fall in honor if their heart is corrupt.

6. Reputation is affected by gossip; honor is unaffected by gossip.

Ummul Mo’mineen Aisha R.Aha, the wife of The Prophet ﷺ was slandered. Maryam was accused. Upright prophets were mocked. Their reputation in the eyes of some people was attacked, but their **honor never decreased**, because Allah honored them. This is why Allah says: **“All honor belongs to Allah.”** When Allah gives honor, no human can remove it.

7. Incarceration: reputation may be broken, but honor is not.

For incarcerated Muslims, this verse is deeply empowering:

- Society may judge you forever, People may attach labels to you, Your reputation may be damaged. But your **honor**—your worth in Allah’s sight— can rise *above what it ever was* through sincere repentance and righteous actions. Allah erases the past and writes a new future.

Closing Advice

Brothers and Sisters in Islam! Every day in this society can be a day of growth. True honor is not found in reputation, but in repentance. Not in earthly power, but in inner strength. Not in the praise of people, but in the acceptance of Allah.

Allah can raise you from your lowest point to your highest rank. The door of honor is always open for those who seek it through Him.

May Allah make our speech pure and our actions righteous. May Allah protect us from evil deeds and evil plots. May Allah grant us honor in this life and the next.