731 - Saying that specific people are going to Paradise or Hell

the question

I have heard in certain lectures given by the shaikhs here in America who consider themselves Salafee, say things like this: My mother is a kafira and I KNOW she is going to hell.
Saying that they know for sure that a certain person is going to hell.
Is this permissible in Islam? Can we say that a certain person is going to Jahannam because of their religion?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

According to Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah, the basic principle is that the issue of who will go to Paradise and who will go to Hell is the matter of 'aqeedah based on what is said in the Qur'aan and Sunnah, and there is no room for reasoning or ijtihaad in this matter.

If the Qur'aan or Sunnah says that a specific person will be in Paradise or Hell, we bear witness to that. At the same time we hope that those who do good will go to Paradise and fear that those who do bad will go to Hell, but Allaah knows best how people will end up.

The issue of saying who will go to Paradise or Hell may be divided into two categories:

1. General statements, which have to do with people's qualities, such as saying, "Whoever associates anything with Allaah in an act of major shirk is a kaafir who is beyond the pale of Islam, and will be in Hell."

Similarly we say that whoever fasts Ramadaan out of faith and in the hope of receiving reward will be forgiven his previous and future sins, and that an acceptable Hajj has no other reward but Paradise. There are many such statements in the Qur'aan and saheeh Sunnah.

If a person asks, “Will the one who calls on anything other than Allaah and seeks the help of anyone but Allaah be in Paradise or Hell?” we would say that he is a kaafir who will be in Hell, if he is shown clear evidence that he is wrong but he stills persists and dies believing that.

If it were said, Whoever does Hajj then does not commit any obscene or immoral act, and dies after his Hajj, for example, what will his fate be? We would say that he is in Paradise. Or the person whose last words in this life are Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah will be in Paradise, and so on.

All of this has to do with people’s qualities and does not apply to any specific, named person.

Specific statements referring to people by name, stating that a particular person will be in Paradise or in Hell. This is not permissible except in cases where Allaah or His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) have informed us of it.

Whoever Allaah or His Messenger have mentioned by name and stated that they will be in Paradise are definitely among the people of Paradise, such as the ten who were given the good news of Paradise (al-‘asharah al-mubashsharah), foremost among whom are the four Khulafa’, Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmaan and ‘Ali, may Allaah be pleased with them.

Those who the Qur’aan and Sunnah mention by name and state that they will be in Hell are definitely among the people of Hell, such as Abu Lahab and his wife, Abu Taalib, ‘Amr ibn Lahiy, and others.

We ask Allaah to make us among the people of Paradise by His Grace and Mercy. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad.