Synopsis of Friday Sermon
Ameer Mustapha Elturk

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on February 7, 2014

“Preserve Allah and Allah will Preserve You”

The Qur’an is the final gift for humanity. Muhammad (SAW) was the seal of Allah (SWT)’s Prophets and Messengers sent as a mercy to the worlds. The followers of Muhammad (SAW) were destined to become the standard bearers of Islam for eternity and it is Muslims who are responsible for the preservation and spread of Islam.

The Prophet (SAW) was careful to sow the seed of iman in the believers’ hearts in order to successfully fulfill their duties. Among such believers were youth like Abdullah Ibn Mas’ood, Mus’ab Bin ‘Umair and Abdullah Ibn Abbas (RAA), who was only thirteen when the Prophet (SAW) died. Certainly, youth play an important and significant role in the preservation and spread of Islam. The Prophet (SAW)’s teachings to Ibn Abbass (RAA) demonstrate the importance of having conviction and firm belief in the Creator and His Will.

Ibn Abbass (RAA) narrates, “One day I was behind the Prophet (SAW), and he said to me, ‘O young boy, I shall teach you some words (of advice): Preserve Allah, and Allah will preserve you. Preserve Allah and you will find Him before you. If you ask, ask of Allah; if you seek help, seek help from Allah. Know that if all people were to gather together to benefit you with anything, it would benefit you only with something that Allah had already decreed for you, and that if they gather together to harm you with anything, they would harm you only with something Allah had already decreed for you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.’”

These precious words of wisdom are meant for all Muslims; men and women, young and old. Speaking directly to Ibn Abbass (RAA), indicates how essential it is to empower Muslim youth with basic foundational religious knowledge that builds their confidence in Allah (SWT).

Abdullah Ibn Abbass (RAA) was the paternal cousin of the Prophet (SAW) and it was for him the Prophet supplicated, “O Allah, make him understand the deen and teach him its interpretation.” Allah (SWT) answered his prayer. Ibn Abbass (RAA) indeed became a scholar of Islam. Droves of people would gather in his house quenching their thirst for the deen. He may in fact be considered the first exegete of the Qur’an. A book of tafsir and commentary on the Qur’an entitled “Tanwir al-Miqbas min Tafsir Ibn Abbas” is attributed to Ibn Abbass (RAA). He transmitted 1,660 authentic hadiths according to the two sahih authors al-Bukhari and Muslim (RA).

The Prophet (SAW) instructed Ibn Abbass (RAA), “I am going to teach some words (of advice).” Acting as a teacher the Prophet expected the attention of the young boy and in return the student was eager to listen and
learn something new from a great teacher like Muhammad (SAW). He (SAW) then gave him the first advice, “Preserve Allah, Allah will preserve you.”

Naturally, Allah (SWT) neither needs preservation nor protection. What is meant by “Preserve Allah,” is preserve and protect the rights of Allah (SWT). The sole right of Allah (SWT) upon humanity is to fulfill the very purpose they were created for. “I have not created the jinns and humans except to serve (make Ibadah to) Me.” (al-Zariyat, 51:56). He alone should be worshipped and obeyed. We must always keep in mind that Allah (SWT) is not only the Creator, but also the Ruler and Sovereign.

For Muslims, preserving the rights of Allah (SWT) entails first and foremost, having genuine faith and love for Him. Our servitude to His majesty consists of upholding the religious duties which include the modes of worship – most importantly the daily prayers (salah). “Preserve your prayers, especially the middle prayer; and stand before Allah in (complete) devotion” (al-Baqarah, 2:238).

Other rights include serving and honoring the rights of others starting with human rights and extending to plants, animals and the environment. Propagating Islam to others is also our duty, “Call to the way of your Lord with the wisdom, good preaching and argue with them in the most courteous way” (al-Nahl, 16:125). Finally, to enjoin what is right, forbid evil and safeguard the limits of Allah by adhering to the permissible and refraining from the unlawful.

The benefits of preserving Allah’s rights are endless. In return, Allah (SWT) will preserve and protect one’s health, wealth, family and even offspring. The story in surat al-Kahf discusses Allah (SWT)’s wisdom behind the preservation of the two orphans’ wealth; simply because, “Their father was a righteous man” (al-Kahf, 18:82).

It is truly amazing how Allah (SWT) protects the minds of the scholars of Islam in their old age, among others, who dedicate their lives to serving Allah (SWT). One finds them mentally acute and focused while others at a similar age show signs of senility and dementia, losing their cognitive and intellectual ability due to memory loss.

Allah (SWT) will never misguide nor leave any faithful sincere servants of His who strictly guard the Qur’an and Sunnah unprotected. “And Allah will not mislead a people after He has guided them” (al-Tawbah, 9:115). On the contrary, “Allah increases the guidance of those who follow the guidance (right path), and given them their awareness (of Him)” (Muhammad, 47:17).

To be qualified for Allah’s protection, one must be sincere and genuine in his or her beliefs and practices. One needs to climb the ladder of iman sweating with every step to feel the excitement and joy of getting closer to Allah (SWT), reaching a state of euphoria. Such ecstasy should not be disrupted by agony and depression during times of trials and tribulations.

One truly finds comfort when one feels the presence of his or her Lord during bad times. “Preserve (the rights of) Allah, Allah will preserve you. Preserve Allah and you shall find Him before you,” in another narration, “You shall find Him in front of you. Know Allah during times of prosperity, He will know you in times of adversity.”

The Prophet (SAW) expressed his admiration concerning the true believer in these words, “How amazing is the affair of the believer. There is good for him in everything and that is for no one but the believer. When something good happens to him, he expresses gratitude to Allah and that is good for him, and if hardship comes his way, he endures it patiently and that is better for him” (Muslim).

The promise articulated by the Prophet (SAW)’s words, “Preserve Allah, and Allah will preserve you,” resonates the assurance one finds in the Qur’an. “And fulfill your (part of the) covenant, I shall fulfill My
(part of the) covenant, and fear (none but) Me” (al-Baqarah, 2:40).

Yaqoub (AS) said it best when he informed his sons, “Allah’s protection is better [than yours], for He is the most merciful of the merciful!” (Yusuf, 12:64). This has been confirmed by Allah (SWT) when He addressed Muhammad (SAW), “O Prophet! Allah is sufficient for you, and the believers who follow you” (al-Anfal, 8:64). And for those who might still have doubt, Allah (SWT) asks, “Is Allah not sufficient for His servant?” (al-Zummar, 39:36). Indeed He is.

The second advice the Prophet (SAW) gave Ibn Abbass (RAA) was, “If you ask, ask of Allah and if you seek help, seek help from Allah.” This principle teaches one to be solely dependent on the Independent. “For verily, Allah is (absolutely) independent of anything in all the worlds” (al-‘Ankaboot, 29:6). Elsewhere in the Qur’an, Allah (SWT) emphatically declares, “O mankind! It is you who need Allah. Allah is the Independent, worthy of all praise” (Fatir, 35:15).

It is Allah (SWT) who truly possesses power and is in control. He gives and takes and does so with wisdom. A sensible person who understands this turns to no one other than Him when in need. We must remember that Allah (SWT) is closer to us than our jugular vein and that, “He is with you wherever you are” (al-Hadid, 57:4).

The Prophet (SAW) instructed us to supplicate to Allah (SWT) even in matters that may seem insignificant, such as needing shoe laces, let alone more important matters such as employment, illness, marriage, etc. It is permissible to ask others concerning worldly matters but one must keep in mind that it is Allah (SWT) who facilitates the help one gets from people.

Regarding supernatural matters one must turn to Allah (SWT) alone. No one knows the future and the world of the unseen other than Allah (SWT). We must realize this fact and refrain from committing the greatest sin, shirk, by going to graves and seeking help from dead saints or by going to an astrologer or any person who claims to know the future. The Prophet’s prescription of the Istikharah prayer (seeking goodness from Allah) is sufficient to receive Allah (SWT)’s help.

As humans we have a tendency to slip and forget that Allah (SWT) is in charge. Thus, we are reminded, “If you ask, ask of Allah and if you seek help, seek help from Allah.” The Prophet (SAW) explained the reason for imparting this notion in the mind of Ibn Abbass (RAA) in these words, “Know that if all people were to gather together to benefit you with anything, it would benefit you only with something that Allah had already destined for you, and that if they gather together to harm you with anything, they would harm you only with something Allah had already destined for you.”

This beautiful lesson on belief in Divine Decree (iman bil-Qadar) which constitutes the sixth article of faith helps one understand the true reality of things and that, “No misfortune ever befalls on earth nor in yourselves, that was not decreed in a Book before We make it manifest. Surely that is easy for Allah” (al-Hadid, 57:22).

The Prophet (SAW) concluded his lesson by these words, “The Pens are lifted and the pages are dried.” In other words, everything that happens in the world of creation has already been recorded and nothing will change the course of Allah (SWT)’s destiny.

Indeed, such great words of wisdom help one overcome anxiety and grieving. Such lessons teach us how to react to pleasant and unpleasant experiences in life. Through this hadith, we become cognizant of Allah (SWT)’s Will and Power. The instructions of the Prophet (SAW) help us achieve contentment, satisfaction and make us feel at ease. In a similar hadith, the Prophet (SAW) assured us that, “help comes through patience; relief supplants distress; and that there will always be ease after hardship.” Therefore, “Preserve (the rights of) Allah, and Allah will preserve you.”