Synopsis of Friday Sermon
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Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on February 25, 2011

The Prophet’s Rights Upon the Believers

It was on the 12th day of Rabi al-Awwal in the year 570 AD that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was born. Allah (SWT) blessed humanity with a person who would eventually change the course of history and who is thought of to be the most influential man history has ever witnessed. Michael H Hart, a historian and author of The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History, ranks Muhammad (SAW) at the top of the list. He justifies his decision with his assertive statement which states, “My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level.”

Muhammad (SAW) of all the past heroes is the most mentioned name today than anyone else in the world. He was as the expression goes, “heaven’s sent.” Indeed Allah (SWT) has spoken the truth when He says, “And We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds” (al-Anbiya’, 21:107).

Allah (SWT) created human beings for the purpose of worshipping Him. Throughout history, He has been sending messengers to them from among themselves to remind them of their purpose of life—to submit to Him, to worship Him, and to obey Him, so that they are released from the bondage of disbelief and polytheism to believing in Allah (SWT); from the rule of injustice to justice, and from the darkness of ignorance to the light of guidance. Humans will have no excuse on the Day of Judgment before Allah (SWT) that they did not receive guidance through messengers. “Messengers (have been sent) bringing good news and giving warning, so that people will have no argument against Allah after the coming of the Messengers. Allah is Almighty, All-Wise” (al-Nisa’, 4:165).

Allah (SWT) ended this long chain of prophets and messengers with Muhammad (SAW). Unlike other prophets and messengers who were sent to a particular people, tribe, or nation, Muhammad (SAW) was sent to all of humankind for all times to come. “And We have sent you to all people to be a bearer of good news, as well as a warner; but most people do not know” (Saba’, 34:28). Muhammad (SAW), the seal of all prophets and messengers, was sent at a particular time in history when humanity was steeped in vices. This was the pre-Islamic age or the age of ignorance (jahiliyyah). The vices were rampant. Idolatry, usury, gambling, intoxication, adultery, fornication, infanticide, oppression, and injustice are just a few examples. Times have turned around and we see all these vices embedded in the so called dominant modern western civilization.

Indeed, Muhammad (SAW) achieved what no other prophet or messenger before him achieved. Suffice it to say that he established justice on the earth by bringing about a just social order. Allah (SWT) instructs him to tell the people: “I am commanded to bring justice between you” (al-Shura, 42:15). This aspect of justice, however, is the manifestation of only a small fraction of his overall meritorious achievements.

Rights of Muhammad (SAW) upon the Believers

Just as Allah (SWT) demands rights over His believing slaves, so does the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has certain rights over the believers. Muhammad (SAW) has five rights over everyone who declares the testimony of faith: “I bear witness that there is no deity other than Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the
messenger of Allah.” These rights are: (1) to believe in him, (2) to obey him, (3) to follow him, (4) to love him, and (5) to honor, respect, and salute him.

1. Believing in the Prophet (SAW)

The second half of the testimony of faith obliges us to believe and attest not only in the prophethood of Muhammad (SAW) but also in the finality of his prophethood. A Muslim who does not believe in the finality of prophethood of Muhammad (SAW) is outside the pale of Islam. Addressing the believers, Allah (SWT) says, “O you who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger” (al-Nisa’, 4:136). There is no Muslim who will say that he does not believe in Muhammad (SAW), but this ayah suggests that believers should believe in the Messenger as he ought to be believed and neither doubt their faith in him nor in the message he gave, no matter how hard the enemies of Islam try to persuade them otherwise. “Believers are only those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted…” (al-Hujurat, 49:15). It is narrated by Abu Musa al-Ash’ari that the Prophet (SAW) said: “Whoever hears of me from my ummah including a Jew or a Christian, and does not believe in me will not enter Paradise.” To believe in the Prophet (SAW) is to obey him, and that is the second right.

2. Obeying the Prophet (SAW)

There are numerous ayat in the Qur’an that urge the believers to obey Allah (SWT) and to obey the Prophet (SAW). “And obey Allah and obey the Messenger…” (al-Ma’ idah, 5:92). To obey the Messenger is to obey and cling to his sunnah, tradition, and practice of the faith. Allah (SWT)’s obedience as a matter of fact is dependent upon the obedience of Muhammad (SAW), and this is asserted by the Qur’an when it says, “Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah” (al-Nisa’, 4:80). Among all other prophets and messengers, Allah (SWT), under His authority, gave Muhammad (SAW) the privilege to enact laws over and above those commandments mentioned in the Qur’an. This is evident from the Qur’anic ayah, “And whatever the Messenger commands you to do, you must do, and whatever he forbids you to do, you do not do” (al-Hashr, 59:7). Therefore, obedience to the Prophet (SAW) while absolutely necessary is also a right upon the believers.

3. Following the Prophet (SAW)

It may appear to some that obeying the Prophet (SAW) is same as following him. This is not quite so. Obedience implies obeying in religious matters pertaining to do’s and don’ts, halal and haram, and all other matters that pertain to din (faith). But there are matters beyond the shar’iah where if one does not follow the Prophet (SAW), he does not necessarily become sinful. The Prophet (SAW), according to the Qur’an is our role model, which implies that we follow him. “You have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allah, for all who put their hope in Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much” (al-Ahzab, 33:21). Following Muhammad (SAW) does not only mean following the Sunnah of eating, drinking, walking, talking, sleeping, dressing, and the like. It also means following the way in which he accomplished his mission through constant struggle to make Allah (SWT)’s din supreme. He established a just social order among many other sterling accomplishments and resounding successes. Anyone who follows the Prophet (SAW) is ensured two glad tidings by Allah (SWT): (1) Allah (SWT) loves that person and (2) Allah (SWT) forgives the sins of that person. Allah (SWT) enjoins Muhammad (SAW) to, “Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:31).

4. Loving the Prophet (SAW)

Muhammad (SAW) also deserves to be loved more than oneself, or anyone, or anything else besides Allah (SWT). We have in surah al-Tawbah, “Say: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your spouses, your tribes, the wealth you have acquired, the trade which you fear a decline, and the dwellings which please you, are dearer to you than Allah, His Messenger, and striving in His cause, then wait until Allah makes manifest His will. And (know that) Allah does not guide the rebellious” (al-Tawbah, 9:24). In this ayah, Allah (SWT) mentions eight things - five among relations and three among worldly possessions - which should not be dearer to a believer than Allah (SWT), His Messenger, and striving in His way. While this does not mean that we cannot or should not love our relations and the worldly possessions, it does mean, however, that the love for these things should always be subordinated to the love of Allah (SWT), His Messenger, and struggling in the path of
5. **Honoring, Loving, and Respecting the Prophet (SAW)**

Last but not least, Muhammad (SAW) has to be honored, respected, and saluted. Allah (SWT) commands the believers to invoke His peace and blessings upon the Prophet (SAW). Allah (SWT) says, “Verily, Allah and His angels bless the Prophet. O you, who believe, invoke Allah's blessings upon him and salute (him) with the salutation of peace” (al-Ahzab, 33:56). This is the Prophet (SAW)’s right which he earned for himself by doing what he did for the believers and for humanity at large, and this cannot be matched by any person in the world.

These are the five duties every Muslim owes Muhammad (SAW). It is incumbent upon the believers to defend him against the aggressors, protect his reputation, and help and support his universal cause. Allah (SWT) commanded, “O you who believe! Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not turn your back on him” (al-Anfal, 8:20)