**Synopsis of Friday Sermon**

Ameer Mustapha Elturk

"Satan has gained control over them and made them forget God. They are on Satan’s side, and Satan's side will be the losers" (al-Mujadilah, 58:19).

To achieve his goal, Satan first lures mankind into *shirk* (polytheism) and *kufr* (disbelief), such as visiting graves and invoking the dead or saints for help, practicing magic, etc. because associating partners with Allah is the greatest sin. “Like when Shaytan says to man, ‘Disbelieve in Allah.’ But when (man) disbelieves in Allah, Satan, ‘I am free of you, I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds’ (al-Hashr, 59:16). If Satan overcomes the son of Adam with this and succeeds to make him a disbeliever, then he is satisfied and pleased.

If he cannot manage to deceive people into committing *shirk* and *kufr*, he does not give up. He causes people to follow *bidah* (innovations) and take them as their religion like celebrating *Mawlid*, celebrating the night of *Isra’ wa al-Mi’raj*, celebrating 15th *Sha’ban* by fasting and praying and as Sufyan al-Thawri said, “*Bidah* is more dearer to Shaytan than sin, for, one may repent from sin, but not from *bidah*.” Because when one sins, he knows that he is disobeying Allah and some time, he may turn to Allah and seek forgiveness and be pardoned. But one, who practices *bidah*, deems his actions to be a form of worship to Allah and thus never even thinks of repentance.

Satan has a host of tricks up his sleeves. If one fails, he pursues another. One of the ways he goes about doing this is to make believers negligent about observing the timings of prayers and about the importance of praying in congregation. He whispers them to ‘take it easy’ and snares then into becoming victims of procrastination. They begin to habitually delay their prayers and hence lose the benefits and rewards of prayers that are offered, preferably in congregation, with full sincerity in the prescribed times. “*The prayer is prescribed for the believers at specific times*” (al-Nisa’, 4:103).

Satan also makes believers forget the virtues and benefits of ablution (*wudu*). According to a hadith, “When the Muslim or the believing servant performs *wudu* and washes his face, every sin he looked at with his eyes will depart from his face with the water or the last drop of water. When he washes his hands, every sin his hands committed will depart from his hands with the water or with the last drop of water. When he washes his feet, every sin that his to which his feet took him will depart with the water or with the last drop of water, until he is sinless.” There is another hadith that says, “When a Muslim makes *wudu* the sins he has committed come away from his hearing and from his sight and from his hand and from his feet, so when he sits he sits down having been forgiven.” We should not put off a good that we intended to do as we never know how much reward we might receive from the hardships we encounter while trying to achieve that good.

Approaching prayers with an attitude of reluctance and laziness is one of the signs of the hypocrites. “The hypocrites think they deceive Allah, but He is deceiving them. When they get up to pray, they get up lazily, showing off to people, and only remembering Allah a very little” (al-Nisa’, 4:142). We have to be especially conscious of not missing the *fajr* prayer because its significance, benefits, and rewards are immense. “Indeed, the dawn recitation is certainly witnessed (by angels)” (al-Isra’, 17:78).

There is a hadith that says, “Whoever prays the dawn prayer in congregation, it is as if he had prayed the whole night long.” We learn through another hadith that “Whoever prays *fajr* is under the protection of Allah.
Do not put yourselves in a situation where Allah has to call you to account for your negligence.” It was mentioned before the Prophet (SAW) that there was a man who slept the night till morning (after sunrise). The Prophet said, “He is a man in whose ears (or ear) Satan had urinated.” Allah’s Messenger (SAW) also said, “During your sleep, Satan knots three knots at the back of the head of each of you, and he breathes the following words at each knot, ‘The night is long so keep on sleeping.’ If that person wakes up and celebrates the praises of Allah, then one knot is undone, and when he performs ablution the second knot is undone, and when he prays, all the knots are undone, and he gets up in the morning lively and merry, otherwise he gets up dull and gloomy.”

It is learnt through a hadith that the most burdensome prayers for the hypocrites are the night prayers (salat al-‘isha’) and the dawn prayers (salat al-fajr), but if they only knew what they contain, they would come even if they had to crawl. On the other hand, there is a hadith that says, “Whoever prays al-Bardayn (the two cool— salat al-‘isha’ and salat al-fajr) will enter Paradise.”

Satan also attempts to distract us while we are praying so that we may preoccupy ourselves with other thoughts. We may even forget the actual number of raka’s we have offered. Such lapses are remedied through performing the Sajdah al-Sahuw. There is an interesting story that relates to the wandering of the mind during salah in case one is not absolutely attentive in one’s prayers. It is narrated that once in the time of the great scholar Imam Abu Hanifa a person hid his wealth into the midst of a forest. After a certain time of period of his life due to a necessity he went looking for his wealth but he could not find it. He could not find the wealth due to the fact that it had been a long time since he could not recover the place where he had hid it. Therefore, the needy man went to Imam Abu Hanifa and the Imam said, “Sorry but I can’t help you I am a jurist not a fortune teller but the man insisted for some help. Imam Abu Hanifa agreed and told the person to pray salah for the whole night. Therefore, the man went back to his house and started to pray his salah and as soon as he started to pray his salah, the place of the wealth came to his mind. Because he was interested about his wealth, he broke his salah and went towards the wealth. The following day he went to the Imam and told him what happened last night. After hearing the story, the Imam replied, “I knew that Satan would not let you pray salah all night” and told him that he should have finished the salah.

Satan also approaches believers while they gather together for the remembrance (zikr) of Allah (SWT). He tricks them into crying and sobbing making them believe that such gestures would be redemption for them from the evil practices such as lying, cheating, dishonesty, usury, and other forbidden things (haram) that they indulge in. The Prophet (SAW) made mention of a man who is constantly in journeys and has disheveled hair and dusty appearance (due to constant journeys for performing acts of righteousness such as Hajj, Umra, seeking knowledge etc.) and he raises his hands towards the sky saying “O my Rabb. O my Rabb”. But his food is from haram. His drink is from haram. His clothes are from haram. He is nourished from haram. How can it (his prayer) be accepted?” Crying and sobbing is only effective and beneficial when one is moved from within while realizing this, people fall into the habit of squandering their wealth and take pride in their ostentatious life styles. The abundance or paucity of wealth, therefore, is not the measure of one’s standing before Allah (SWT). Allah, then one knot is undone, and when he performs ablution the second knot is undone, and when he prays, all the knots are undone, and he gets up in the morning lively and merry, otherwise he gets up dull and gloomy.”

Another trick of Satan is to make the wealthy believers feel that they are rich because Allah (SWT) has honored them. “As for man, when his Lord tests him by honoring him and favoring him, he says, ‘My Lord has honored me!’” (al-Fajr, 89:15). Wealth or any bounty of Allah (SWT) given to someone is not the criterion for Allah (SWT) honoring that person; rather these blessings have been bestowed by way of testing that person. Not realizing this, people fall into the habit of squandering their wealth and take pride in their ostentatious life styles. They forget that such conduct and behavior is despicable in the sight of Allah (SWT). “Indeed the squanderers (wasteful) are brothers of satans, and Satan is ungrateful to his Lord” (al-Isra’, 17:27). The abundance or paucity of wealth, therefore, is not the measure of one’s standing before Allah (SWT). The Prophet (SAW) said, “Verily Allah does not look to your figures nor to your wealth, but He looks to your hearts and to your deeds.”

Another trick of Satan is to make one proud of one’s act of worship. This is most noticeable when those who perform pilgrimage (hajj) want themselves to be called with the honorific titles of Hajji (for males) or Hajja (for females). This is undesirable as it smacks of showing-off (riya’).

Satan even prods the believers to go to excesses while mourning at the death of near and dear ones. He makes them mourn the dead in ways that are not sanctioned and are among the practices of the period of ignorance (jahiliyyah), such as crying aloud, beating one’s face and chest, tearing one’s garments and so on. A hadith tells us, “He is not of us who beats his face, tears his clothes and bewails loudly when misfortune happens to him as was done before during the days of ignorance.” Another hadith says, “It is prohibited for a woman who
believes in Allah and the Day of Judgment to mourn any dead person more than three days except the four months and ten days in the case of a husband.”

Satan often beguiles people in matters of choosing a spouse and makes them incline more towards looking for looks, wealth and status of a prospective spouse than for his or her religious orientations and practices. Religion and good character should be the first criterion for selecting one’s spouse. According to a hadith, “One may choose a woman as a wife for the following reasons or for some of them: her wealth, her family status, her beauty, and her religion. So you should marry the religious woman otherwise you will be a loser.” The above hadith is addressed to men in making their choice and looking for their proper mate. There is another hadith which is addressed to women guardians stating the criterion of making the proper choice for choosing their best future partner. The Prophet (SAW) said, “When someone with whose religion and character you are satisfied asks for your daughter in marriage, accede to his request. If you do not do so there will be corruption and great evil on the earth.”

Another ploy of Satan is to make people believe in astrologers and soothsayers. Sometimes, even educated people start relying on the words of those who claim to have some knowledge of the future or who predict a person’s future based on his or her palm lines. There is no dearth of such fortune-tellers. The unseen (ghayb) is known only to Allah (SWT). There is a stern warning against the practice of fortune-tellers. According to a hadith, “Whoever attends a fortune-teller, asks him about anything and believes him, his salah would not be accepted for forty days.” Moreover the Qur’an tells us not to pursue such matters, which are of the unseen. “Do not pursue what you have no knowledge of; hearing, sight and hearts will all be questioned” (al-Isra’, 17:36).

Our archenemy Satan also comes in our way when we are doing business transactions. One of the oldest ways of cheating in business is selling commodities with less than the standard weight or measurement. This would include the practice of selling substandard, inferior or adulterated products which is one of the most common forms of business fraud these days. The basic motive behind this malpractice is to maximize profits and accumulate material possessions, without any regard for the ethical validity of the means to be adopted for this purpose. Allah (SWT) has warned us against such malpractices. “Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with accurate scales: that is better and fairer in the end” (al-Isra’, 17:35). “Give full measure, and be not of those who give less (than the due). And weigh with the true balance”. (al-Shu’ara, 26: 181-182). “Woe to those who give short measure; who demand of other people full measure for themselves, but give less than they should when it is they who weigh or measure for others!” (al-Mutaffifin, 83:1-3).

Our youth are no less vulnerable to the plots of Satan. One of the things besides many others that have recently cropped up is the game of skateboarding. Though apparently an innocuous sport, one of its hidden agendas is to make Satan one’s buddy. This takes place in devious ways. The skateboarders’ well-known magazine called ‘Thrasher’ speaking about Satan in one of its ads showing the outline of a hand says, “Things have been kind of slow down here. So put your dirty little hand on mine. Say my name, and I will grant you one free trick—no strings attached—Signed by Mr. Lucifer B. Satan. AKA (The Devil).” Our kids fall into the trap and start chanting Satan’s name. It is a coincident that this ad appears in the center of the magazine, and an ayah in almost the center of the Qur’an says, “We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ and they all bowed down, but not Iblis: he was one of the jinn and he disobeyed his Lord’s command. Are you [people] going to take him and his offspring as your masters instead of Me, even though they are your enemies? What a bad bargain for the evildoers!” (al-Kahf, 18:50).

In order to keep ourselves protected from the tricks and plots of Satan, we should know the insidious ways he tricks us. We should seek Allah’s refuge from Satan’s evil ways and hold on to the teachings of the Qur’an and the Sunnah; rather than to let him entice us and destroy us.

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