In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on Oct 12, 2012

The Ten Commandments (Part 10)

Today’s khutba is the conclusion of a series of khutbas delivered earlier on the Qur’anic version of the Ten Commandments are contained in the Qur’an in Surat Surat al-Isra’ (Bani Israel). Nine of the Ten Commandments have been discussed so far. The topic of today’s khutba will focus on the tenth commandment, which has to do with maintaining modesty, humility, and humbleness. “And do not walk on the earth arrogantly; you cannot break it open, nor reach the mountains in height” (al-Isra’, 17:37). This ayah indicates that our gait or manner of walking should not reflect arrogance or pride in anyway. The way one walks speaks a lot about one’s personality.

We learn from the Qur’an that the wise sage Luqman while counseling his son gave him instructions similar to the divine commandments under discussion. For example, he said, “My son, do not attribute any partners to God: attributing partners to Him is a great injustice’” (Luqman, 31:13); and compare this with the Qur’anic injunction, “Your Lord has decreed that you should worship none but Him…” (al-Isra’, 17:23). In Surat Luqman we have “We have enjoined upon the people to be good to their parents” (Luqman, 31:14), and in Surat al-Isra’ we have, “You should show ihsan (kindness) to your parents” (al-Isra’, 17:23). Towards the end of his counseling, Luqman advises his young son: “Do not turn your face from people in scornful pride, nor walk on earth haughtily. Surely God does not like the proud and boastful” (Luqman, 31:18). These are the same words that resonate in the divine injunction given to us in ayah 37 of Surat al-Isra’, “And do not walk on the earth arrogantly…” (al-Isra’, 17:37). An important lesson we can derive is that parents should start guiding and training their young children in their most formative years, before they attain adulthood and maturity with Islamic injunctions, morals and manners.

Surat al-Isra’ does not specify or suggest the manner in which one should walk. Surat Luqman, however, does so. “Walk modestly and lower your voice, for the ugliest of all voices is the braying of the ass” (Luqman, 31:19). One’s gait should be modest and moderate, neither having one’s face down looking at the ground nor up looking at the sky. Neither should one walk too fast nor too slow. The Arabic root word qasd in the ayah is suggestive of balance and moderation. Also, the tone of one’s voice should not be too loud, high-pitched or harsh; rather it should be somewhat low and measured.

It is worth mentioning that the first and foremost quality of the slaves of the All-Merciful (‘ibad al-Rahman) as described in Surat al-Furqan has to do with their manner of walking. ‘The slaves of the All-Merciful are those who walk humbly on the earth and, who, when the ignorant speak to them, say, ‘Peace’”’ (al-Furqan, 25:63). Because of the humbleness of their character, they do not fall into unnecessary disputes with ignorant people; rather they gracefully avoid them and wish them peace. Humbleness and humility are among the noblest virtues a believer could be blessed with. This is because true believers keep an eye on their insignificance and imperfection. They know and understand Allah’s perfection and His favors upon His creatures. Therefore, it does not behoove a person to be arrogant and haughty. Some people when using the word ‘I’ in their speech are
quick to add words that mean, “I seek refuge in You (Allah) from the word *ana* (‘I’). It is Shaytan who is arrogant because he openly declared to Allah (SWT) his own superiority over Adam (AS) by saying, “I am better than him: You created me from fire and him from clay” (al-A’raf, 7:12).

The best of humanity—Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was himself the most humble of persons. Rather than strutting and acting proudly as conquerors normally do, he entered Mecca after its conquest in the most humble manner. We learn from the *Sira* that in gratefulness to Allah (SWT) for the peaceful victory over Mecca, and in praise and deference to Him, he lowered his head so much while riding his mount that his beard touched the back of his mount. Indeed, the Prophet (SAW)’s humility is unmatched.

It is Allah (SWT) alone who possesses the attributes of praise, greatness and pride. "*All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the heavens and the Lord of the earth, Lord of all the worlds. All greatness (Kibriya, proper Pride) belongs to Him in the heavens and earth He is the Almighty, the All-Wise*” (al-Jathiyah, 45:36-37). In a Hadith Qudsi, Allah (SWT) said: “Pride is My cloak and greatness My robe, and he who competes with Me in respect of either of them, I shall cast him into Hell-fire.” The words *rida* and *izar* in this hadith signify respectively the dress put around the waist and around the shoulders. Naturally, Allah (SWT) is not to be conceived as having mass or body that would need a dress. Such metaphoric expressions are attributes of divine glory. So, whoever competes to become associated with Allah (SWT) in these attributes belongs to Hell. One of Allah’s names is *Al-Mutakabbir* (The Supremely Great). The Arabic word *Kibriya* and its derivatives from the three letters root (*kaf-ba-ra*) have to do with nobility, greatness, majesty, glory, pride and carry other similar shades of meaning. We have in Surat al-Hashr, “He is Allah; there is no god but He, the King, the Holy, the Preserver, Protector, Guardian, the Almighty, the Irresistible, the supremely Great (al-Mutakabbir). Far too exalted is God for what they associate with Him” (al-Hashr, 59:23).

The first quality of true believers described in Surat al-Mu’munun is that they are humble in their prayers. “*It is the true believers who are successful; those who pray humbly*”(al-Mu’munun, 23:1-2). The word used in this *ayah* for humbleness is *khushu‘* that denotes humbleness and humility towards Allah (SWT). The tenth commandment under discussion in the khutba has to do with conducting oneself with humbleness towards people as humbleness of character is the foundation of all moral excellence. The way one walks and talks are an index of a person’s nature and conduct.

Arrogance is not to be equated with self-confidence. While the former is despicable, the latter is commendable. A Muslim must possess and reflect self-confidence, and be proud of his or her deen and Islamic identity, especially when it comes to challenging the enemies of Islam and Muslims. The Prophet’s *Sira* mentions the story of a companion named Abu Dujana, which makes us comprehend the contextual distinction between arrogance and self-confidence. Anas (RA) reported that prophet Muhammad (SAW) took hold of his sword on the Day of the Battle of Uhud and said: Who would take it from me? All the persons stretched their hands saying: I would do it, I would do it. He (Muhammad (SAW)) said: Who would take it in order to fulfill its rights? Then the people withdrew their hands. Abu Dujana said: I am here to take it and fulfill its rights. Abu Dujana was a man of courage who utilized to stand proud and brave in war. He had a red head-band that he wore round his head. Whenever he was head-banded everybody knew that he was determined to fight to death. As a result as soon as Abu Dujana took the Prophet’s (SAW) sword and put on his head-band, he began strutting proudly. Upon seeing this, the Messenger of Allah (SAW) stated, “This is a sort of walking that Allah detests except in such a circumstance (Jihad).” When it comes to asserting one’s skills and capabilities for a good cause and for the overall good, then it must be done. This is self-confidence and not arrogance.

Arrogance is an evil trait which people had before and people have now. We had Nimrud and Firaun in the past and we have people like them now—heads of ruthless and oppressive regimes, not wanting to relinquish their thrones. Allah does not like such people. Surat al-Nahl makes it clear that the final destination of such people is hell. “*Enter the gates of Hell, remaining in it for ever. How evil is the abode of the arrogant. (al-Nahl, 16:29)*. We are also reminded in Surat al-Zumar to this effect, “*Do not the arrogant have a dwelling place in Hell?*” (al-Zumar, 39:60).
Arrogance is among the major sins (kaba’ir) in Islam. It affects the human heart. We learn through a hadith that says, “Take to humility. Let no man pride on another man, nor adopt an attitude of self-eminence and let no one be unjust to anyone.” Another hadith tells us that the Prophet (SAW) said, “One will not enter Paradise, if one has an atom’s weight of arrogance in his/her heart.” In another hadith, the Prophet (SAW) has been reported to have said, “On the day of Qiyamah, arrogant people will be raised as humans scaled down to the size of tiny ants under the shadow of disgrace descending from all sides. They will be driven to a prison of Hell…”

We need to take all the divine commandments very seriously. As regards all that we have been told not to do, Allah (SWT) says, “The evil of all these actions is hateful to your Lord” (al-Isra’, 17:38). May Allah (SWT) help us to be His true humble slaves, and to be modest and moderate in everything we do. May we submit to Him, obey His commandments, and comply with all that He has enjoined upon us.

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