Synopsis of the Friday Sermon
Ameer Mustapha Elturk

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

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Islam Iman & Ihsan (Part 2)

Today’s khutba is a continuation of the previous khutba that discussed ayah 93 of Surat al-Ma‘idah and Hadith Jibril. We learnt from the ayah about the three levels of deen (maratib al-deen) or the three levels of faith (iman). One’s iman or faith may be (1) at the level of Islam (2) at the level of iman or (3) at the level of ihsan. These three elements constitute the essence of the Islamic faith. As for the hadith under discussion, what appears to be strange is that Jibril (AS) himself came in the form of a man to teach the companions (sahaba) their religion. Strangely enough, even though this incident took place in the latter part of the Prophet’s life, it had not dawned upon the sahaba despite their having spent good time with him to ask him these fundamental questions, “What is Islam?” What is iman?” and “What is ihsan?”

The sahaba did know what Islam is as they had learnt from a hadith that Islam is built upon five (pillars): testifying that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the prayers, giving zakat, making pilgrimage to the House and fasting the month of Ramadan. Hadith Jibril, however, gives us a different dimension—the knowledge as to who can be considered as a Muslim in an Islamic State. A Muslim is one who accepts all the six articles of faith, professes the testimony of faith, and accepts the modes of worship. He will continue to remain a Muslim legally, even though he may not be a practicing Muslim, unless he openly declares his disbelief in any of the articles of faith or rejects any one of the modes of worship. Accordingly, on legal grounds, we have the ruling from Imam Abu Hanifa, that iman neither increases nor decreases. It remains the same.

It is important to understand the fundamental difference between Islam (legal iman) and iman at the level of conviction in the heart (yaqeunun fil qalb). This distinction is mentioned in Surat al-Hujurat, which says, ‘The desert Arabs say, ´We have iman.´ Say, ´You do not have iman. Say rather, We have become Muslim, for iman has not yet entered into your hearts´” (al-Hujurat, 49:14). Here the Prophet (SAW) is told to inform the desert Arabs that they have no iman, because it is not found in their hearts. In connection with this ayah, Ibn Taymiyyah and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (May Allah bestow His mercy upon them) have concluded that Allah (SWT) Himself had proved that there could be a state of Islam without the element of iman in it. In other words, while every Mu’min is a Muslim, every Muslim is not necessarily a Mu’min. Islam is a legal status based on things which can be verified through the verbal declaration of faith.

As far as iman is concerned, it is to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and fate (qadar), both the good and the bad of it. These are unseen realities that a Muslim must believe in. Any Muslim who denies any one of these articles of faith will cease to be a Muslim, even if he or she performs all the prescribed modes of worship.

Referring to the question, “What is iman?” It is to be noticed that there is no mention of declaration of faith (shahadah) in the articles of faith. This is because what is being referred to is real iman or conviction of
faith in the heart. However, the depth of the conviction depends on the level of God-consciousness or taqwa a person has and varies from person to person. The *iman* as spelled out in the *hadith* is also called *al-iman al-mufassal* or the detailed *iman*.

There is another definition of *iman* that basically constitutes only one article of faith, and that is belief in Allah (SWT). It is called *al-iman al-mujmal* or the generalized form of *iman*. It implies to have faith in Allah as He is known by His names and attributes and to accept all His commands, to profess the faith with the tongue while having full conviction in the heart. Real *iman* rests on how much *iman* one has in one’s heart. It is important to bear in mind that on the Day of Judgment, Allah (SWT) is not going to judge us on the basis of Islam. Rather He will judge us on the basis of our *iman*.

A Muslim is one who declares the testimony of faith, accepts the modes of worship, and believes in the six articles of faith. A Mu’mín, on the other hand is one whose life is a reflection of Islam in practice for the sole attention of seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT). A Muslim will be considered a Mu’mín only when one lives Islam in letter and spirit, avoiding anything that may hurt or harm anyone or anything including humans, plants, animals, and one’s surroundings. A Muslim may pray for the sole purpose of fulfilling an obligation and that’s it. A Mu’mín, however, is delighted when he prays, and the prayers (*salah*) become a source of his elevation. The Prophet (SAW) said in a *hadith* that prayers (*salah*) had been made a delight for him. In another *hadith* he said that *salah* is what elevates a Mu’mín. We have to keep measuring ourselves in light of these examples and see where we stand.

Allah (SWT) is Just, Wise, Mighty, and Merciful. It is solely His prerogative to decide the fate of a person in the hereafter in terms of that person’s entry into hell or paradise. A Muslim may because of his disobedience to Allah be sent to hell in order to purge him before he is sent to paradise. There is a *hadith* that says that whoever says the *shahadah* will enter paradise. A Mu’mín, however, is promised paradise. It is in all fairness that the treatment of the two should be different. The qualities of a Mu’mín are described in detail in Surat al-Mu’minun. “Successful indeed are the believers; those who are humble in their prayer; those who turn away from all that is frivolous; those who purify themselves; those who safeguard their chastity; except with their wives, and what their right hands possess for then they are free from blame, but those who seek to go beyond that are transgressors; those who are faithful to their trusts and promises; and those who safeguard their prayers; these are the heirs of Paradise; they shall abide in it forever” (al-Mu’minun, 23:1-11).

Indeed, only when one’s consciousness of Allah (SWT) reaches the level of certainty (*yaqeen*) and one’s actions become a proof of it can one be called a Mu’mín. To reach that level, we have to make a concerted effort to be mindful of Allah (SWT) at all times, and not only at the time of praying or performing other rituals. The ayah from surat al-Ma’idah clearly illustrates this notion, “Those who believe and do good deeds will not be blamed for what they may have consumed (in the past) as long as they are mindful of God (have taqwa), believe and do good deeds, and continue to be mindful of God (having more taqwa) and believe.” (al-Ma’idah, 5:93). Struggling in the path of Allah (jihad) to honor the Creator becomes the passion of a real believer. Struggling in the path of Allah (jihad) is an integral part of real *iman*. The link between the two is explained in surat al-Hujurat, “The true believers (Mu’minun) are only those who have faith in God and His Messenger and then doubt not, but strive hard with their wealth and their persons for the cause of God. Such are the truthful ones” (al-Hujurat, 49:15).

Surat al-Nisa’ lays down the first five articles of faith. “O you who believe! Believe in God and His Messenger and in the Scripture He sent down to His Messenger, as well as what He sent down before. He who denies God, His angels, His Scriptures, His messengers and the Last Day has surely gone far astray” (al-Nisa, 4:136). We come to know of the sixth article of faith through Hadith Jibril, and that is to believe in divine decree (*qadar*), both, the good and the bad of it. The term *qadar* refers to destiny, and should not be confused with the term *qadr*, which has to do with power, and the *qudrah* of Allah. The term *qadr* is found in the ayah, “Truly, We sent it down on the Night of Power” (al-Qadr, 97:1). *Qadar* literally means proportion or measure. Its usage can be found in the ayah, “We have created everything in due measure/proportion (qadar).” (al-
Qamar, 54:49), and in the ayah, “It is He who created everything and determined its exact measure (qadar)” (al-Furqan, 25:2). Qadar is understood as the infinite Knowledge of Allah (SWT). When Allah (SWT) created each thing, He determined when it would come into existence and when it would cease to exist. He also determined its qualities and nature. All this is documented in the eternally preserved tablet (Lawh al-Mahfouz). “Nothing occurs, either in the earth or in yourselves, without its being in a Book before We make it happen. That is something easy for Allah” (al-Hadid, 57:22). And everything in the universe, both in the realms of the seen and the unseen, is completely subject to the overriding power of Allah. Nothing can happen outside His Will. “He has knowledge of all things” (al-Baqarah, 2:29).

It is to be understood clearly that pre-knowledge of everything does not necessarily mean predestination. We are not compelled by Allah to do acts which we do of our own choice. We are not programmed robots; rather we have been given freedom of choice to follow the right path and be grateful or take the wrong path and be ungrateful. The way has been shown to us. “We guided him on the Way, whether he is thankful or unthankful” (al-Insan, 76:3). Man is solely responsible for the choices he makes. In order to have faith in the qadar, we need to understand the qudrah of Allah. “Truly, Allah has power over all things” (al-Baqarah, 2:109).

To believe in and to understand the concept of qadar helps us to have complete reliance (tawakkul) on Allah. We then begin to appreciate that whatever happens, (good or bad) is from Allah (SWT).

Edited by Dr. Munawar Haque
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