Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on Sept 06, 2013

Have taqwa of Allah wherever you are (Part 5)

This is the fifth and last of the series of sermons on the subject, “Have taqwa of Allah wherever you are”. A Muslim is required to become an obedient humble slave of Allah (SWT). He is required to mold his life, values, priorities, and ambitions according to the commands of his Lord. He is also required to preach and disseminate the message, the ideology, and the practical guidance of Islam to his fellow human beings, enjoining all that is good and forbidding all that is evil. Finally he is required to try his utmost to establish God’s kingdom of heaven, here on earth, so that divine justice reigns supreme.

To fulfill these requirements, it would behoove a Muslim to comply with the teachings of Islam in all spheres of life, be they economical, social, or otherwise. One’s financial dealings should be free of interest (riba), and one’s income should be from lawful (halal) sources. The mutual relationship between the spouses should be good, respectful, and pleasing to Allah (SWT). They are charged with the responsibility of reforming the society. They are in need of one another and are helpful and supportive of each other. “The believers, both men and women, support each other; they enjoin what is good and forbid evil, they establish salat and pay the zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger. It is they upon whom Allah will bestow His grace, for Allah is almighty and wise” (al-Taubah, 9:71).

When married couples realize their duties towards Allah (SWT) and towards the people, and have the taqwa of Allah, it is more likely that they will succeed in their mission, because they understand that they are here on earth to please Allah (SWT) by fulfilling their religious obligations and duties. They also understand that this life is fleeting and short-lived. They look forward to the eternal blissful life of paradise and work for it. “The satisfaction of worldly desires through women, and children, and heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, and pedigreed horses, and cattle and lands is attractive to people. All this is the provision of the worldly life; but the most excellent abode is with Allah” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:14). Those who have taqwa are promised everlasting blessings and bounties in the next life. “Say, Shall I tell you of something better than that? Those who have taqwa will have Gardens with their Lord, with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them tirelessly, forever, and purified wives, and the Pleasure of Allah. Allah sees His slaves” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:15). An ayah in Surat Yasin tells us, “The Companions of the Garden are busy enjoying themselves today. They and their wives will be reclining on couches in the shade. They will have fruits there and whatever they request. Peace! shall be the greeting from the Merciful Lord.” (Ya Sin, 36:55-58).

To merit such rewards, the couples need to be patient and need to have the taqwa of Allah (SWT) in all matters of life. If ever they commit a sin, they should repent immediately. Human beings are not angels. They can and they do commit sins. According to a hadith, “All of the children of Adam are sinners, and the best of sinners
are those who repent.” We should also abide by the teachings of the *hadith* that says, “Fear Allah wherever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good one, it will wipe it out, and behave well towards people.” A God-fearing and God-conscious person is not necessarily a perfect human being, and may fall in error or sin. He knows that doing a good deed after realizing his mistake will expiate the sin that was committed by him.

Returning back to Allah’s obedience and doing what pleases Him will take away the sins of the disobedience and will expiate the sins. One of the good deeds (*hasanat*) according to some scholars is the *salat* (prayers). “Establish salat at each end of the day and in the first part of the night. Good actions (*hasanat*) eradicate bad actions (*sayyiat*). This is a reminder for people who pay heed” (*Hud*, 11:114). A *hadith* tells us, “Five prayers and from one Friday prayer to (the next) Friday prayer is an expiation (of the sins committed in between their intervals) if major sins are not committed.” One of the many benefits of *salat* is that it restrains one from indecency (*al-fahsha*’) and evil (*al-munkar*). “Surely prayer restrains one from indecency and evil and remembrance of Allah is greater. Allah has knowledge of all your actions” (*al-’Ankabut*, 29:45). Muslims who offer their five daily prayers regularly are definitely less prone to commit sins than those who only perform the Jumua prayers on Fridays.

Often times, when someone has done bad to us, we retaliate by doing something bad to him, and that worsens matters. The Qur’an tells us to repel evil with good. “Good and evil deeds are not equal. Repel evil with what is better; then you will see that one who was once your enemy has become your dearest friend” (*Fussilat*, 41:34). This means that whatever is done to repel evil should be good in itself. For example, a charity given to expiate a sin should be from *halal* and not *haram* sources.

To behave well towards people, one has to have good manners, and this is a condition for achieving piety. Manners and character be they good or bad are traits that are acquired through influences of one’s environment and surroundings. The Prophet (SAW) said, “The best among you are those who have the best manners and character.” He (SAW) also said, “The believers with the most complete faith (*iman*) are those with the best manners.” There is another *hadith* in which the Prophet (SAW) said, “I have only been sent to complete good character.” Highlighting the importance and virtue of good manners, according to the Prophet (SAW) a person can reach the level of a person who prays all night and fasts all day just because of his good manners. There is also a *hadith* according to which the Prophet (SAW) said, “Should I not inform you of the most beloved and the closest of you to me on the Day of judgment?” The sahaba said, “Yes”. He (SAW) said, “The best of you in manners.”

Who is our model? Most certainly, it is none other than the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). “You have indeed in the messenger of Allah a good example for those of you who look to Allah and the Last Day, and remember Allah always” (*al-Ahzab*, 33:21). Testifying his sublime character, Allah (SWT) says to His beloved messenger, “And surely you are indeed of a sublime character” (*al-Qalam*, 68:4).

Every human being is born with a sound intellect and an unpolluted nature (*al-fitrah al-saleemah*). *Fitrah* is the inborn natural predisposition, which exists at birth in all human beings. According to a *hadith*, “Every newborn child is born in a state of *fitrah*. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian…” It is the influence of the immediate environment, primarily at home, secondarily at school, and thirdly everything in the surroundings that impacts the minds of people. Negative effects of these influences pollute their pure nature. Hence, it is crucial that we maintain and guard our sound intellect and pure nature. We should not only shun all false notions and worldviews, but also challenge and confront them. At the same time, we have to develop a correct attitude towards our basic beliefs in *Tawhid*, *Risalah*, and *Akhirah*.

From the dawn of times till the advent of Muhammad (SAW), prophets and messengers were sent by Allah to guide human beings. They provided answers to the basic, fundamental, primordial questions regarding the Creator, the creation, the purpose of life, the role of man, the right and wrong, the lawful and the unlawful, accountability on the Day of Judgment, the eternal reward and punishment, and so on.
What is the source of information to know what is good and what is evil? The Qur’an and the Sunnah are our primary sources to know this. Any man-made legal, moral and ethical rule, however sound and rational it may appear to be will always remain imperfect because of limitations, prejudices, and weaknesses of human beings. Muslims believe that prohibited things ordained by Allah are harmful and cannot become beneficial or permissible even if the whole world and the entire mankind may say to the contrary. The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) movement that is being promoted and that is spreading like wild fire is a prominent example of this. Vice is depicted as virtue, and people get carried away.

Restoring sound intellect and pure nature is very important, because it is only then that one can begin to be sincere to one’s fellow human beings. Our actions start with our intentions. Sincerity of intention, therefore, is absolutely necessary. As far as piety is concerned, it is not enough to fulfill the rights of Allah (SWT) in terms of adhering to the modes of worship. It is also essential to have good attitude and behavior towards one’s parents, wife, children, relatives, neighbors, and other members of the community. There are numerous Qur’anic ayat and Prophetic traditions that allude to the importance of behaving well towards one’s parents, wives, neighbors and others. As for treatment of parents, the Qur’an says, “Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none but Him, and show kindness to your parents. If either or both of them attain old age with you, say no word of contempt to them and do not rebuke them, but always speak gently to them” (al-‘Isra’, 17:23). As for treating one’s wife, the Prophet (SAW) said: “Among the Muslims the most perfect, as regards his faith, is the one whose character is excellent, and the best among you are those who treat their wives well.” And as for regard for one’s neighbor, a hadith tells us, “Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should not hurt his neighbor and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should serve his guest generously and whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, should talk what is good or keep quiet.”

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was sent as mercy to the entire humanity. He taught us to be respectful to all people—close and distant. Particularly we should be respectful to our elders, teachers, scholars, Imams, and those in authority. One may express one’s difference of opinion with them, if and when required, but this should be done with due respect and politeness; not rudely or arrogantly.

Being truthful and trustworthy is integral to having good manners. The Prophet (SAW) was known as ‘the truthful and the trustworthy’ (al-Sadiq al-Ameen). We know from the sirah how even the polytheists (mushrikun) of Mecca who neither believed in him nor in his message kept their possessions with him in trust. We also learn that before his emigration to Madinah, Muhammad (SAW) made sure that the things kept in his trust were returned back to their rightful owners before he left Mecca for Madinah. Keeping promises is also important. Describing the true believers, the Qur’an says that they are “those who are faithful to their trusts and promises” (al-Mu’munin, 23:8). A hadith addresses both these issues of honoring trusts and fulfilling promises. The Prophet (SAW) said, “There is no faith for the one who has no trust, and there is no religion for the one that does not fulfill his promises.”

Among other Islamic etiquette of dealing with people is to be humble, patient, just, fair, caring, and courageous. One should also be punctual, especially during appointments and meetings. One should also visit the sick and accompany the funeral of a deceased Muslim. We have to try our best to emulate the example of our Prophet (SAW). Once when Aisha (the Prophet’s wife - RA) was asked about the Prophet’s character, her response was very brief, but very meaningful. She said, “His character was the Qur’an”. To be close to the Prophet (SAW) on the Day of Judgment and to be successful in the hereafter, we have to mold ourselves to be able to lead a God-conscious life. As Muslims living in America, we have no choice but to set an example to our non-Muslim fellow human beings. The message we preach has to be practiced by us. After all, example is better than precept.
May Allah (SWT) bless us all with physical, mental, and spiritual health, and with pure Islamic fitrah. May we have the taqwa of Allah wherever we are. May Allah bless our families, the community, and the humanity at large. Ameen.

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