Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on October 04, 2013

**How to become Allah’s Friend?**

Today’s sermon discusses how to become a friend (wali) of Allah and the benefits of becoming His friend. In a hadith qudsi, the Prophet (SAW) said, “Allah (SWT) says, ‘He who is hostile to a friend (wali) of Mine, I declare war against him. My slave approaches Me with nothing more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory for him, and My slave keeps drawing nearer to Me by means of supererogatory (nawafil) acts of worship until I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he seizes, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will surely give to him, and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely protect him.’”

The Arabic word wali has several meanings, among others; protector, guardian, patron, supporter, ally and friend. The phrase wali al-amr (the father or guardian of a child), for example, is one who takes care of anything concerning the child. Similarly, if Allah (SWT) is someone’s wali, then Allah becomes his protective guardian. He takes care of him and becomes close to that person. Allah (SWT) is the protector of the believers. “Allah is the Protector (wali) of those who believe. He brings them out of darkness into light” (al-Baqarah, 2:257). Allah (SWT) says in Surat al-Taubah, “He is the Master and Patron (maula) of the believers and they should put their trust in Him. “Say (O Prophet): ‘Nothing can happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our Master (maula). It is in Allah that the believers should put their trust’”(al-Taubah, 9:51). Similarly, in Surat al-Hajj, Allah (SWT) says, ”So establish salat and pay zakat and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector (maula), the best Protector, the best Helper” (al-Hajj, 22:78).

Of course a wali of Allah (SWT) does not act as a guardian to Allah, because He is the Creator, the Self-Sufficient, and the One who is beyond any need (Al-Ghani). A person who becomes Allah's wali is one who becomes Allah's friend and ally. A God-conscious, faithful believer who attains the rank of being Allah's ally and friend feels no fear and knows no sorrow. “Undoubtedly, the friends of Allah shall have no fear and nor shall they grieve” (Yunus, 10:62).

There are good reasons for a believer to become the friend of Allah (SWT). First and foremost is that Allah (SWT) will be on the side of the believer to help and protect him. Second, Allah becomes his guardian and supporter. Third, there is a guarantee from Allah to His friends that they will live in peace and tranquility without any fear or grief.

The awliya or friends of Allah (SWT) are pious and righteous people who endear themselves to Him. One should strive to emulate the good traits and teachings of these righteous people rather than erroneously elevating them to a status of divinity out of adoration and reverence. Unfortunately, this occurs in many parts of the world, particularly while visiting graves of such awliya. Beware of this incorrect practice, as this is a form of shirk. The Qur'an reminds, “Do not call on anyone else besides Allah” (al-Jinn, 72:18).
Every Muslim should aspire to become the wali of Allah. Rather than merely paying lip service by saying, “I believe,” he or she should have real faith—a real personal conviction in the heart. Our predecessors, the companions (sahaba) of the Prophet (SAW), were at the level of the friends (awliya) of Allah (SWT).

There are two things one needs to become the wali of Allah; iman and taqwa. “Undoubtedly, the friends (awliya) of Allah shall have no fear and nor shall they grieve. Those who have iman and are God-conscious (having taqwa)” (Yunus, 10:62-63). Iman implies real faith. Taqwa means to have the constant awareness of Allah (SWT) throughout one’s life and to fear the consequences of disobeying Him. Indeed one who lives one’s life with these two qualities and characteristics is a friend of Allah.

The friend of Allah is a special person. Thoughtfully, carefully and obediently, he carries out the basic obligatory duties of worship (‘ibadat). By doing this, he endears himself to Allah (SWT). We understand this by relating it to an obedient son who endears himself to his father. The father feels joy and pride to see his son fulfill all the duties assigned to him. This phenomenon can be understood from the hadith qudsi mentioned above which says, “My slave approaches Me with nothing more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory for him.”

The friend of Allah does not stop at adhering meticulously to the obligatory duties (fara‘id) of deen—salah, zakah, siyam, and hajj. He wants to draw himself closer to Allah (SWT) out of intense love for Him by doing voluntary acts, beyond the bare minimum that is obligatory upon every believer. It is to be understood that true believers love Allah the most. “And those who (truly) believe love Allah most” (al-Baqarah, 2:165). According to the hadith, Allah says, “My slave keeps drawing nearer to Me by means of supererogatory (nawafil) acts of worship until I love Him.”

Thus, a friend of Allah, in addition to offering his obligatory prayers should also strive to pray the sunnah prayers that the Prophet (SAW) used to pray regularly (sunan al-mu‘akkadah) and those that he prayed occasionally (sunan ghayr mu‘akkadah). Naturally, those who want to become the friends (awliya) of Allah strive to emulate the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). They offer these practices (sunan) with a religious fervor, careful not to miss any of the supererogatory prayers that among others include the twelve sunnah prayers, the salah offered after daybreak (Dhuha/Ishraq), the witr prayers (which is wajib), the tahajjud prayers, etc.

Similarly, in addition to the fasting observed in the month of Ramadan, the friends of Allah, in accordance with the prophetic practice, fast on other days as well. For instance, they fast every Monday and Thursday of the week, the six days of Shawwal, the three white days (ayyam al-beedh) corresponding to the 13th, 14th, and 15th of every lunar month, the first nine days of Thul Hijjah, the day of Ashura and a day preceding or following it, etc. In matters of spending (infaq) in the way of Allah, the friends of Allah do not stop at the obligatory charity (zakah), but keep spending in the way of Allah (fee sabillillah) from whatever resources they have. The friends of Allah, if they are able to afford, and if circumstances allow them, may, out of intense love for Allah, perform hajj and ‘umrah as many times as they can.

The ultimate manifestation of Allah (SWT)’s favor upon His friends or awliya is laid out in the hadith qudsi cited above, “And when I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he seizes, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will surely give to him, and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely protect him.” This allegorical depiction indicates that Allah guides such a person to do only the things that pleases Him. He begins to use his eyes and ears to hear and see the lawful, desirable and useful, and not the unlawful, undesirable and useless. He begins to use his limbs only for engaging in permissible deeds and other works of righteousness, and avoids using them for impermissible and sinful activities. The steps he was taking toward eternal doom (hellfire) he now takes toward eternal bliss (paradise).

Allah and His friend love each other. The way to love Allah, as the Qur’an says, is to follow the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). “Say (O Prophet), if you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your
sins. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:31). Following the Prophet means to follow his footsteps and emulate his example.

When one strives to become the friend of Allah (SWT), He makes angels and people love him. The Prophet (SAW) says, “When Allah loves someone He calls to Jibril (AS) saying, ‘O Jibril, I love such and such a person, so love him.’ Then Jibril will call to the (angels) of the heavens, ‘Allah loves such and such a person so love him.’ And the angels will love [that person]. And then Allah will place acceptance on earth for that believer.” An ayah in Surat Maryam tells us, “Verily, the most gracious God will appoint enduring love (in the hearts of people) for those who believe and do righteous deeds.” (Maryam, 19:96).

The friend of Allah also becomes among those whose supplications are accepted by Allah (SWT) - (al-Du’a al-Mustajab). The hadith qudsi quoted earlier mentions this truth, “If he asks Me, I will surely give to him.” And finally, Allah protects His friends in this world and in the hereafter. The same hadith tells us, “If he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely protect him.” Allah protects them from satan, his agents and all types of evil in this world, and keeps them on the path that leads to His pleasure on the Day of Judgment.

The obligatory acts of worship (‘ibadat) constitute the very pillars on which the edifice of Islam is built. In this day and age, we need more and more friends of Allah to build this beautiful structure of Islam. If we desire a change, we first have to deserve it. If we do not move in the direction shown to us by Allah, and do not struggle in His path, Allah (SWT) may replace us with others who will do the job that is required to be done. The characteristics of such friends of Allah are described in Surat al-Ma’idah. “O you who believe! If any of you forsake (renounce part or all) your deen (way of life), Allah will soon replace you with people whom He loves and who love Him, who are humble toward the believers, hard on the disbelievers, and who strive in the Way of Allah without fearing anyone's reproach. Such is Allah's favor. He grants it to whomever He wills. Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing” (al-Ma’idah, 5:54).

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