Synopsis of Friday Sermon
Ameer Mustapha Elturk

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on June 28, 2013

Have taqwa of Allah wherever you are (Part 2)

Today’s khutba is the second in the series of khutbas on the topic: “Have taqwa of Allah wherever you are.” According to a hadith, the Prophet (SAW) said, “Islam is public, whereas iman is in the heart.” Then he pointed to his chest three times, and said, “Taqwa is right here. Taqwa is right here.” Actions are manifest publicly, and faith, which is in the heart, does not become manifest. Taqwa, also, as discussed earlier, is in the heart. What is the connection or the relationship between iman and taqwa? An ayah of Surat al-Ma‘idah explains this relationship. “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 Allah (have taqwa), believe and do good deeds, and continue to be mindful of God (having even more taqwa) and believe, and grow ever more mindful of God (having even more taqwa) and perfect their faith (Ihsan): God loves the Muhsineen (those who strive to perfect their faith)” (al-Ma‘idah, 5:93).

Believers may be divided into three categories: the Muslimun, the Mu’minun (those who have reached a level of real iman), and the Muhsinun (those who have reached the level of ihsan). People from each one of these categories have taqwa, but at varying levels. The taqwa of Abu Bakr (RA), or of any of the top companions of the Prophet (SAW), for example, was at an exalted level that cannot be compared to anyone of us today. There were other companions, however, who belonged to other categories—Mu’minun and Muslimun. One’s level of taqwa is proportionate to one’s level of iman. The higher the level of taqwa, the higher is the level of faith (iman).

We are told that the paradise is prepared for the Muttaqeen. “Race with one another towards forgiveness from your Lord and towards a paradise the width of which spans the heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for the (Muttaqeen) God conscious” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:133). The Mu’minun (true believers) are guaranteed success. “Successful indeed are the Mu’minun” (al-Mu’minun, 23:1). Hence the Muhsinun, being at a higher level than the Mu’minun, will by default qualify for success as well. The Muslimun (although have taqwa), however, are not guaranteed success like the earlier two categories. Allah (SWT) may pardon them and admit them into paradise or He may send them to hell for purging them of their sins before admitting them into paradise after the process of intercession of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). We have no right to be judgmental as to who falls into which category. It is solely Allah’s prerogative to do so, for He knows and we do not know. We may, on the basis of apparent piety of a person, form a wrong opinion about him, but Allah knows the condition of every person’s heart. So, this issue should be left entirely to Allah.

The Qur’an informs us about the traits of the people of taqwa. Their first conspicuous feature is outlined in the very beginning of Surat al-Baqarah. “This is the Book; there is no doubt in it. It is a guide for those who are mindful of Allah (Muttaqeen), who believe in the unseen, and are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We have provided them with; those who believe in the revelation sent down to you and in what was sent before you, and firmly believe in the life to come. Such people are following their Lord’s guidance and it is they who shall be successful” (al-Baqarah, 2:2-5).
The God conscious people spend in Allah’s cause in prosperity as well as in adversity. Ayah 134 of Surat Aal ‘Imran tells us, “The ones who give, both in prosperity and adversity, who restrain their anger and pardon people- Allah loves those who do good” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:134). Spending implies not only wealth but includes our time, our labor, our energy, our experience, our planning, and our priorities. So we have to ask ourselves how much we are spending from these things in the path of Allah and what priority does ‘deen’ have in our lives. People of taqwa also control their anger and do not even show that they are angry. They forgive others out of love, and this is something very difficult, because people generally tend to be unforgiving and vengeful.

The following ayah outlines more traits, “And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah? - And [who] do not persist in what they have done while they know” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:135). Here immorality refers to all types of lewd, vulgar, and shameful deeds. A person wrongs himself when he commits sins because he puts himself in harm. We are not angels. We do commit sins—big or small; knowingly or unknowingly; intentionally or unintentionally. What is significant is how we react to our sins and misdeeds. The Muttaqi, as soon as he finds he has fallen into sin immediately remembers Allah (SWT) and asks for His forgiveness and his faith gives him hope. He abandons his wrong conduct and makes amends. He does not persist to do anything wrong that he may have done.

In the event of having committed an evil deed, one should immediately try to follow it up with a good deed. This is in line with divine revelation. “Surely, Good actions eradicate bad actions” (Hud, 11:1144). It is also in line with the Prophetic tradition, which is the subject of the topic under discussion. The hadith says, “Have taqwa of Allah wherever you are, and follow an evil deed with a good one to wipe it out, and treat the people with good behavior.”

The people of taqwa fulfill their promises and honor their pledges and contracts. “Indeed Allah loves those who honor their covenants and fear Him. Allah loves the righteous” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:76). The same message is conveyed to us in Surat al-Baqarah. “And those who keep their word whenever they promise anything” (al-Baqarah, 2:177).

While speaking about the blessed state in which the God-fearing, pious people will find themselves in the hereafter, Allah describes in Surat al-Dhariyat some of their special traits in this worldly life. “The people with taqwa will be among gardens and fountains, receiving what their Lord has given them. Certainly before that they were good-doers. They used to sleep but little in the night; and before dawn, they would seek forgiveness; and in their money was a portion for the beggar and the needy.” (al-Dhariyat, 51:15-19). Rather than wasting time over frivolous things and being in places where they should not be, especially during nights, people of taqwa sleep only a little, and are engaged for the rest of the night in worship and remembrance of their Lord, seeking forgiveness from Him. They are also conscious of the fact that those who are deprived of necessities have a right over their wealth, and hence they fulfill that right. Despite the natural propensity everyone has for wealth, the virtuous people (muttaqun) give away their wealth in various good causes as certified in Surat al-Baqarah. “The virtuous are those who, despite their love for it, give away their wealth to their relatives and to orphans and the very poor, and to travelers and those who ask [for charity], and to set slaves free” (al-Baqarah, 2:177). The same ayah informs us that such righteous and God-fearing people demonstrate patience in times of hardship and adversity. “And (they) show patience in hardship and adversity, and in times of distress. Such are the true believers; and such are the God-conscious” (2:177).

The Qur’an tells us that the reward of people who are righteous and steadfast and do good will never be wasted. “The truth is that Allah does not waste the reward of those who do good, who are righteous and steadfast” (Yusuf, 12:90). In order to have taqwa in our lives, it is necessary to be with the people who are truthful. They are the ones who are mindful of Allah (SWT). They help us to increase our iman and taqwa. Allah emphatically says, “O you who believe; have taqwa of Allah and be with those who are truthful” (al-Tawbah,
We are informed through an authentic hadith that, “A person follows the way (deen) of his friend, so look whom you befriend.” God forbid, if we were to befriend those who were unmindful of Allah (SWT), they would definitely take us away from the path of Allah.

Allah (SWT) finds a way out for those who have taqwa, from every difficulty and provides them from sources they cannot even imagine. “And whoever has taqwa of Allah, He will find a way out for them and will provide for them from an unexpected source” (al-Talaq, 65:2-3). With such glad tidings, one should immediately stop all types of sinful, evil, and unlawful activities including indulging in usurious transactions, and sincerely repent to Allah seeking His forgiveness. Allah will extricate that person from the evil he or she may be indulged in and make his or her way smooth and blessed. Once we have implicit faith and trust in Allah, He will be sufficient for us. “Allah suffices for anyone who puts his trust in Him” (al-Talaq, 65:3). Allah (SWT) will also make things easy for those who are mindful of Him. “Allah makes things easy for those who are mindful of Him” (al-Talaq, 65:4). Additionally, He will erase the sins of the God-fearing person. “Whoever has taqwa of Allah – He will erase his bad actions from him and greatly increase his reward” (At-Talaq, 65:5).

In reality, a true God conscious believer has nothing to lose as long as he or she is aware of his or her Lord wherever he or she may be—in private or in public; at home or at work. Allah (SWT) never abandons the people of taqwa. He is with them all the time. “Allah is with those who are righteous and those who do good” (al-Nahl, 16:128). This is a guarantee and a source of comfort for the righteous believers. “And who is truer to his promise than Allah?” (al-Tawbah, 9:111). We have to constantly remind ourselves of the hadith on taqwa that is the subject of our discussion. “Have taqwa of Allah wherever you are, and follow an evil deed with a good one to wipe it out, and treat the people with good behavior.”

We have to be conscious of Allah and be careful of what we send ahead for tomorrow. “O you who believe! Be conscious of Allah, and let every soul consider carefully what it sends ahead for tomorrow; be conscious of Allah, for Allah is well aware of everything you do” (al-Hashr, 59:18). We have to be prepared for that grave day of accountability when we will be standing before our Lord, without any help from any quarter. The enormity of that day will be such that the closest of kin will be fleeing from each other as each one of them will have enough concern to keep him or her preoccupied. We have in Surat ‘Abasa, “On that Day a man shall flee from his own brother, his mother, his father, his wife and his sons, for each of them will be absorbed in concerns of their own on that Day” (Abasa, 80:34-37). Allah is well aware of everything we do. The intentions we make, the words we utter, and the actions we do are all being recorded moment by moment. It will be a grievous loss to be unmindful of Allah and to forget Him, for we are warned, “And do not be like those who forgot God, so He made them forget themselves. These are the disobedient ones” (al-Hashr, 59:19).

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