Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on Dec 21, 2012

Purity of Intention (Part 2)

In continuation of the last sermon on the topic of ‘Purity of Intention,’ which discussed the hadith on the importance of sincerity of intention (ikhlas al-niyyah), today’s sermon will be focused more on the latter part of that hadith that talks about hijrah. The hadith states, "Actions are (judged) by motives (niyyah), so each person will have what he or she intended. Thus, he whose migration (hijrah) was to Allah and His Messenger, his migration is to Allah and His Messenger; but he whose migration was for some worldly thing he might gain, or for a woman he might marry, his migration is to that for which he migrated."

It can be inferred from the hadith that hijrah may be of two types: (1) Hijrah to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger and (2) Hijrah to this material world. Usually, one’s intention is inclined to either one of them. One could have a leaning toward both but that would be reflective of the attitude of a hypocrite (munafiq) whose tongue is with Allah and His Messenger but whose heart is with the world (dunya).

The background of this hadith explains the last statement of the Prophet (SAW). During the time when the emigration from Mecca to Al-Medina was made compulsory on all Muslims living in Mecca, a person sent a proposal of marriage to a woman named Umm Qais, which she turned down saying that he would have to emigrate to Al-Madinah to marry her. Accordingly, he migrated to Al-Medinah for this specific purpose, and the two were married there. On account of this event, the man came to be known among the Companions as Muhajir Umm Qais. It is learnt from another hadith that there is no hijrah (from Mecca to Al-Medina) after the conquest of Mecca, reason being that Islam had been established in Mecca after its conquest by the Muslims.

It may well be asked if the immigration of most people in present times is toward Allah and His Messenger or toward the duniya. It is evident that it is toward the latter. The Qur’an does not ask us not to abandon the duniya; rather it advises us to use it as means to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT). “Seek the life to come by means of what God has granted you, but do not neglect your rightful share in this world. Do good to others as God has done good to you” (al-Qasas, 28:77). It is part of Allah’s plan that the duniya with all its adornments and attractions has been made alluring for people in order to test them. “It has been made attractive for people to love the desired things; that is, women and children, hoarded heaps of gold and silver, branded horses, cattle and farms. That is an enjoyment of the worldly life; while the best of abodes is with God” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:14).

Apparently, the multitude of people who migrated to this land (United States) did not do so in the path of Allah and His Messenger; rather they did so for other reasons; perhaps for higher education, for livelihood, or for safer and better living conditions. We need to keep a watch on the intentions behind our actions. It is noteworthy that our intentions can also be transformed or sublimated from being purely world-driven to being driven for seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT). As it is, nobody is aware of the remaining moments of one’s life. “No one can die except with God’s permission at a predestined time. If anyone desires the rewards of this world, We
shall grant him thereof; and if anyone desires the rewards of the Hereafter, We shall grant him thereof; and We will reward the grateful” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:145). People get what they strive for. Allah (SWT) rewards them accordingly, but He is grateful to those individuals who put Him ahead of everything else.

Death is inevitable at the appointed time. “Every human being is bound to taste death: and you shall receive your rewards in full on the Day of Resurrection. He who is kept away from the Fire and is admitted to Paradise, will surely triumph; for the life of this world is nothing but an illusory enjoyment” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:185). There are some people who get so captivated by the duniya that they desire nothing beyond its deceptive and fleeting enjoyment. The Qur’an captures their sentiments in ayah 200 of Surat al-Baqarah by stating, “There are some who say, Our Lord, give us abundance in this world.” However, the same ayah goes on to say, “These shall have no share in the world to come.” There are some others about whom the Qur’an tells us that they supplicate Allah (SWT) for good in both worlds and seek His protection from the fire of hell: “But there are others who pray, Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and protect us from the torment of the Fire” (al-Baqarah, 2:201). This supplication (du’a) is said to be one of the most adored supplications of the Prophet (SAW). The good in this world is not necessarily restricted to material possessions. The Prophet (SAW) died with nothing. The hasana (goodness) is this world is more related to one’s contentment of the heart with whatever Allah (SWT) has granted one. Of course, there is nothing wrong in asking Allah for anything that one may need.

It is important that while pursuing the duniya for one’s sustenance, livelihood, and well-being, one’s gaze should be fixed toward the hereafter (akhirah). While a healthy balance needs to be maintained between the two, the focus should always be toward the akhirah. One will not be deprived of what has been decreed for one in terms of worldly provisions, but care should be taken to earn one’s livelihood through permissible (halal) means and not through prohibited (haram) means. Allah (SWT) has commanded us to be sincere to Him. “They were only ordered to worship Allah (alone), sincerely devoting their deen to Him as people of pure natural belief, and to establish salat and pay zakat — for that is the true deen” (al-Baiyinah, 98:5).

There are two types of hijrah one may undertake when immigrating in the path of Allah and His Messenger: the physical hijrah and the spiritual hijrah. The spiritual hijrah means to depart from anything that is forbidden and to lead a life of complete submission to Allah (SWT) by fully complying with His commandments to the best of one’s ability. “So be dutiful to God as best as you can; and listen, and obey” (al-Taghabun, 64:16). As for the physical hijrah, it is to physically migrate from one place to another in the vast spacious land of Allah (SWT) for the purpose of seeking His good pleasure. “And if anyone leaves home as a migrant towards God and His Messenger and is then overtaken by death, his reward from God is sure. God is most forgiving and most merciful” (al-Nisa’, 4:100). It is the purity of intention that attracts Allah’s forgiveness and mercy.

Hijrah may also be classified into being either individual or collective. As far as individual hijrah is concerned, there is a hadith that says, “A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands the Muslims are secure; and a muhajir (emigrant) is one who abandons what Allah has forbidden.” Another hadith tells us, “The muhajir is the one who avoids what Allah has prohibited.” When asked as to which hijrah is the greatest, the Prophet (SAW) is reported to have said that it is to leave what displeases Allah (SWT). As for the collective hijrah, it is explained through a hadith according to which the Prophet (SAW) said, “I declare obligatory upon you five things; Allah (SWT) has commanded me to do so. They are: organization (jama’ah), listening, obeying, making hijrah and making jihad for the cause of Allah (SWT).” Having discussed about hijrah, it is also important to know about jihad (struggle). It is narrated that the Prophet of Allah (SAW) returned from one of his battles, and thereupon said, “You have arrived with an excellent arrival, you have come from al-jihad al-asghar (lesser jihad) to al-jihad al-akbar (greater jihad)—the striving of a servant (of Allah) against his desires.” Then there is the jihad with the Qur’an (jihad bil Qur’an) in order to make Allah (SWT) supreme, here on earth. The blessed companions of the Prophet (SAW) exemplified the physical, the spiritual, the individual, as well as the collective hijrah in their lives.
Hijrah and jihad are two sides of the same coin. Hijrah in the path of Allah (SWT) without the element of jihad embedded in it remains only a partial hijrah, because the two are inseparable. This truth can be derived from the ayah, “I will certainly wipe out the bad deeds of those who emigrated and were driven out of their homes, who suffered harm for My cause, who fought and were killed. I will certainly admit them to Gardens graced with flowing streams, as a reward from God: the best reward is with God” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:195). As a matter of fact, hijrah and jihad in the path of Allah (SWT) are only for the true believers who look forward to God’s mercy. “But those who have believed, migrated, and striven for God’s cause, it is they who can look forward to God’s mercy: God is most forgiving and merciful” (al-Baqarah, 2:218). They strive to qualify for Allah’s mercy for they understand the hadith which says that nothing would save one on the Day of Judgment, including one’s good deeds other than one is covered by the mercy (rahmah) of Allah (SWT).

True believers have no doubt about what Allah (SWT) and His Messenger have promised them. As such they keep striving for the cause of Allah. The Qur’an calls them al-Sadiqun (the truthful ones). “The believers are only those who have faith in God and His Messenger and then doubt not, and strive, hard with their wealth and their persons for the cause of God. Such are the truthful ones” (al-Hujurat, 49:15). They do not stoop down to the level of the hypocrites who say what they do not do, and who are admonished by the Qur’an, “O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do?” (al-Saff, 61:2). The true believers strive to live according to the ayah that says, “My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for God, the Lord of the worlds” (al-An’am, 6:162).

It is crucial that our hijrah to this fertile land of opportunities is also with the purest of intentions and with the declaration that it is toward Allah and His Messenger; otherwise we may fall in the categories of those who will have no portion in the hereafter, and Allah knows best.

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