Synopsis of Friday Sermon
Ameer Mustapha Elturk

Ramadan is Rahmah

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on August 19, 2011

There are numerous manifestations of Allah’s mercy in the blessed month of Ramadan. It was in Ramadan that the Qur’an was sent down. “The month of Ramadan is the month when the Quran was sent down” (al-Baqarah, 2:185). It was in Ramadan that obligatory fasting was prescribed. “Therefore, whoever of you is present in that month, should fast” (al-Baqarah, 2:185). According to a Hadith, when the month of Ramadan comes in, the gates of heaven are opened and the gates of hell are closed and the devils are chained. The spiritual objective of the month of Ramadan is to attain taqwa or God-consciousness. Giving glad tidings about this month, the Prophet (SAW) said that it is the month, whose beginning is mercy, its middle forgiveness, and its end emancipation from the fire of hell.

There are many ayat and a Hadith that explain the magnitude of Allah’s mercy. “I will inflict My punishment on whom I will; but My mercy encompasses all things; so I will ordain it for those who act righteously and pay the Zakat and those who believe in Our Signs” (al-A’raf, 7:157). According to a Hadith, when Allah (SWT) brought about the creation into existence, He wrote on the ‘Arsh (throne): My Rahmah prevails over my wrath. We are constantly reminded that two of the oft-repeated attributes of Allah (SWT) are al-Rahman and al-Rahim, which appear before every surah of the Qur’an except Surat al-Taubah. We have in Surat al-Baqarah, “Your God is One God; there is no deity but He, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate” (2:163). A Hadith states that Allah created one hundred parts of mercy; distributed one amongst His creation, and kept back ninety-nine parts of mercy with Himself (for the Day of Resurrection); if the unbelievers realize what mercy Allah (SWT) has, they will never despair of entering Jannah and if the believers realize the tortures and punishment that Allah (SWT) has, they will never get over their fear of hell.

Allah’s mercy is evinced in His sending the final Messenger (SAW) as a mercy to all the worlds. “We have only sent you as a mercy to all the worlds”(al-Anbiya’, 21:107). His mercy is also displayed in sending the final revelation (al-Qur’an), the ultimate guidance, to mankind. “O mankind! There has certainly come to you an advice from your Lord, and a cure for what is in the breasts, and a guidance and mercy for the faithful. Say: It is the favor of Allah and His mercy that should be the cause of their rejoicing. That is better than anything they accumulate”(Yunus, 10:57-58). This mercy is expressed in another ayah as follows: We have sent down the Book to you making all things clear and as guidance and mercy and good news for the Muslims. (al-Nahl, 16:89).

One can attain the mercy of Allah (SWT) firstly by obeying Allah (SWT) and the Messenger (SAW). “And obey Allah and this Messenger that you may be shown mercy” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:132), and secondly by abiding by the teachings of the Qur’an. And this (Qur’an) is a blessed Book We have sent down. So follow it and fear Allah, so that you may be favored with mercy (al-An’am, 6:155).

Ramadan is the best time to instill the quality of taqwa in us. To do this, it is required that during the course of fasting, one not only gives up food, drink, and spousal relations, but also restrains from the misuse of the tongue, the eyes, the ears, and the limbs. In following the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW), who is the best model and the best teacher, we should try our best during Ramadan to increase our ibadah by offering the tarawih and tahajjud prayers, in addition to other supererogatory prayers, by reciting the Qur’an more, by being more charitable, by being more merciful to one another, and by doing as many good deeds as possible.
Husbands and wives should be merciful to one another. “And among His signs is that He has created for you, from your selves, mates, that you may incline towards them and find rest in them, and He has engendered love and mercy between you. Surely in this are signs for people who reflect” (al-Rum, 30:21). The parents should be merciful to their children and vice versa. “And lower your wing in humility towards them in kindness and say, ‘Lord, have mercy on them, just as they cared for me when I was little” (al-Isra’, 17:24). Muslims have to be merciful to not only their brothers and sisters in faith but also to all their brothers and sisters in humanity. According to a hadith, “Those who are merciful will be given mercy by the Most Merciful. Be merciful to those on earth and the One above the heavens will have mercy on you.”

Caught between tyrannical rule, oppression, and injustice, the Muslim world is going through difficult times. We should assist our brothers and sisters in Islam both materially and morally. We should sympathize with them. The least we can do for them is to remember them in our supplications. According to a Hadith, "The Believers are like a single body; if a single limb feels pain, then the whole body along with it suffers with fever and sleeplessness.”

After bestowing His mercy on us, Allah (SWT) is eager to exercise His forgiveness on us as long as we do not associate partners with Him. A Hadith qudsi states, "O son of Adam, as long as you call upon Me and put your hope in Me, I would forgive you for what you have done and I do not mind. O son of Adam, if your sins were to reach the clouds of the sky and then you would seek My forgiveness, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, if you were to come to Me with sins that are close to filling the earth and then you would meet Me without ascribing any partners with Me, I would certainly bring to you forgiveness close to filling it.” In another Hadith, the Prophet (SAW) said, “All human beings without exception are sinful, but the best sinners are those who repent the most.” So, Ramadan is the best time to repent.

A sincere repentance according to the scholars has certain conditions, such as to stop doing the sinful act, to regret for the sin done, to determine never to go back to that sin again and to give back the right to whom it is due if the sin involves a person. Allah (SWT) tells us not to lose hope in His mercy. “Say: My slaves, you who have transgressed against yourselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Truly Allah forgives all wrong actions. He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful” (al-Zumar, 39:53). One of the best ways to repent and seek forgiveness is to recite the Sayyid al-Istighfar, taught to us by the Prophet (SAW). “O Allah! You are my Lord. There is no deity except You. You created me and I am Your slave, and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise (which I made to You) as much as I can. I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So forgive me, for nobody can forgive sins except You.

The Prophet (SAW) added, “If somebody recites it during the day with firm faith in it and dies on the same day before the evening, he will be from the people of Paradise and if somebody recites it at night with firm faith in it and dies before the morning he will be from the people of Paradise.”

The last third part of Ramadan is the time to invoke Allah (SWT) for freeing us from hell. It is reported that at the end of Sha’ban, the Prophet (SAW), in a long Hadith, addressed his companions, giving them many advices regarding the blessed month of Ramadan. One of them is as follows: "... And in this month there are four things you should continue to perform in great number, two of which shall please your Lord, while the other two shall be those which you cannot do without. Those which shall be to please your Lord are to excessively recite the Shahadah, 'La ilaha illallah' and to seek much Istighfar. The two you cannot do without are that you should beseech Allah (SWT) for entrance into Paradise and seek refuge from Hell." “Our Lord, give us good in this world and in the Hereafter, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire” (al-Baqarah, 2:201). It is recommended to Ask Allah (SWT) for the loftiest Paradise (Jannat al-Firdaus al-A’ala). There is a Hadith which says that fasting is a shield from the fire and from sin. Another Hadith says that the fasting person has two occasions for joy, one when he breaks his fast because of his breaking it and the other when he meets his Lord.

Indeed, the greatness and virtues of the month of Ramadan are beyond our imagination and estimation.

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