



Synopsis of Friday Sermon

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Enjoining Good and Forbidding Wrong

الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر

The duty of Ordaining Good and Forbidding Wrong is our duty

Allah (SWT) in Surat Aal ‘Imran made it very clear, “*You are the best nation (ummah) evolved for (the service of) mankind, ordaining good and forbidding evil.*” (Aal Imran, 3:110) It is on the basis of this responsibility Allah (SWT) praised the last nation of the last Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Muslims bear dual purposes, to serve Allah (SWT) and humanity. Serving humanity may transpire in many ways. One of the ways that is most beneficial to the welfare and wellbeing of the society is through the duty of *amr bilma’ruf* and *nahy ‘an al-munkar*.

What is *amr bilma’ruf* and *nahy ‘an al-munkar*?

Amr bilma’ruf literally is the ordainment of what is generally known to be good and *nahy ‘an al-munkar* is the forbiddance of what is despised.

The Arabic word *ma’ruf* from the root word ‘A Ra Fa means, that which is commonly known or acknowledged. The Arabic expression “‘*amal ma’ruf*, إعمل معروف” means, “do me a favor,” or “do a good deed.” As a Qur’anic term the meaning varies according to its usage. It may mean fair, reasonable, equitable, kindness, or good.

The word *munkar* from the trilateral root Na Ka Ra, means anything that is disapproved, unrecognized, unpleasant, strange, injustice, denied, or rejected. *Munkar* is anything a sound mind would rule out to be ugly, unpleasant, nasty, horrible, awful or despised by the sharia and declares it to be prohibited *haram* or disliked *makrooh*. *Munkar* is the antonym of *ma’ruf*.

The exhortation *amr bilma’ruf* and *nahy ‘an al-munkar*, means to, “Enjoin what is right and forbid what is reprehensible.”

To command or ordain what is good, *amr bilma’ruf*, is also to call to it, to promote it, and to persuade and convince others about it. Similarly, in addition to being disapproved by the sharia and abhorred by Allah (SWT), *nahy ‘an al-munkar* is to obstruct the *munkar*, to deter and prevent people from doing *munkar*, and to take every measure to resist *munkar* so it does not

become the norm. *“Verily, Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and generosity towards relatives and He forbids what is shameful, (all that is munkar) evil, and transgression. He admonishes you, so that you may take heed.”* (al-Nahl, 16:90) Allah does not like to see *munkar* spread.

Muhammad (SAW) was not the only Prophet who received Divine Guidance and sharia. Musa and Isa, may God’s peace and blessings be upon them, were recipients of sharia also, *“To each of you We have ordained a code of law (sharia) and a way.”* (al-Ma’idah, 5:48) Sharia evolved over time. It started with Nuh (AS) and the final Divine Guidance and sharia received by the last Prophet and Messenger Muhammad (SAW) until the end of time came at a time when the social evolution reached its climax. The final Divine Order for humanity or sharia elucidates what is right and wrong, good and evil, desirable and undesirable. It ensures those who follow its guidance a good and happy life in this world and salvation in the next world for those who have attained faith. Islam is indeed a blessing.

In one of the greatest and shortest chapters of the Qur’an regarding salvation, Allah made it very clear that enjoining one another to the truth is one of four criteria to success and salvation. *“By the fleeting time, verily, man is in a state of loss indeed. Except those who believe, do good deeds, enjoin one another to the truth, and enjoin one another to patience.”* (Al-Asr, 103:1-3) “Enjoining one another to the truth” necessitates *“amr bilma’ruf and nahy ‘an al-munkar.”*

Muslims in the West and the United States enjoy unrestrained freedoms that led to many *munkars*. The moral and ethical biblical values that shaped Europe and the US have decayed and the spread of evil has prevailed. What was once *ma’ruf* became *munkar* and vice versa. What was once a virtue became a vice and what was once a vice became a virtue. *Munkar* has become the norm. Case in point, tattoos became body art, homosexuality and same sex marriage is now being taught in schools as natural, gambling is a form of entertainment, cohabitation is preferred over marriage, extramarital affairs is an accepted norm, etc. and on a grand scale evils such as racism, poverty, environmental injustice and militarism still persist.

Muslims bear the responsibility of caring for the welfare and well-being of our fellow human beings. We must exercise our duty of promoting all that is good and forbid evil to be worthy of the title “the best ummah,” *“You are the best nation (ummah) evolved for (the service of) mankind, ordaining good and forbidding evil.”* (al-Baqarah, 2:143) The survival of good is possible only through the process of eradicating evil.

This duty is very much similar to the duty of dawah. It is an individual as well as a collective duty. At the individual level, Allah (SWT) calls on, *“The believers, both men and women, support each other; they order what is right and forbid what is wrong; they keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; they obey God and His Messenger. God will give His mercy to such people: God is almighty and wise.”* (al-Tawbah, 09:71)

Devout believing men and women who, each within his or her sphere of influence, exercise this duty will ultimately receive Allah’s Mercy and be granted their promised Heaven. *“God has promised the believers, both men and women, Gardens graced with flowing streams where they*

will remain; good, peaceful homes in Gardens of lasting bliss; and- greatest of all- God's good pleasure. That is the supreme triumph." (al-Tawbah, 09:72)

At the collective level, Allah (SWT) enjoins upon the ummah this duty, *"Let there be a group from among you who call 'others' to goodness, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. And it is they who will be successful."* (Aal 'Imran, 3:104) Salvation indeed depends on the fulfillment of our obligations and duties.

It may be easy to promote good and virtuous acts through word and deed, but how does one eradicate evil. The process of eradicating evil may be achieved in three distinct ways according to the Prophet (SAW); the hand, tongue and heart. He (SAW) instructs, "Whoever among you sees evil (munkar), let him change it with his hand. If he is unable to do so, then with his tongue. If he is unable to do so, then with his heart, and that is the weakest level of faith." (Muslim)

The Hand: The word hand used in the hadith and within the context of the Qur'an denotes authority. Allah (SWT) in Surat al-Mulk says, *"Blessed is He in Whose hand is all authority, and He has power over everything."* (al-Mulk, 67:1) If one is in a position of authority, one should destroy the evil he or she recognizes. If not, then one may go through the judicial system and electoral process to eliminate evil. Evil may be abolished through the courts or voting. It requires hard work, persistence and patience.

The Tongue: If we fail to eradicate evil through authority, the second step is through the tongue. One must speak out and express his/her displeasure against evil plaguing society. Case in point; racism and poverty. One must stand with the oppressed against the oppressor and challenge the system through organized protests, rallies, speeches, slogans and media.

The Heart: In the event one is unable to eradicate evil through authority and tongue due to lack of courage, the last step is to feel it in one's heart. The heart should throb. One should be disturbed and lose sleep over the evil that surrounds our lives. Such feelings reveal that faith (*iman*) is still alive. Otherwise, the heart is dead and void of faith.

Abdullah Ibn Masoud (RAA) reports, "The Messenger of Allah said, 'Never had Allah sent a Prophet before me to a nation who had not among his people disciples and companions who hold unto his tradition and carry out his directive. Then, they were succeeded by their descendants who preached what they did not practice and practiced what they were not commanded to do. Whoever strives against them with his hand is a believer, whoever strives against them with his tongue is a believer, and whoever strives against them with his heart is a believer, and beyond that there is no faith not even (the weight of) a mustard seed.'" (Muslim)

Therefore, let us take heed and do what we can, individually and collectively, to uphold our duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil solely for the pleasure of Allah and the good of people.

To be effective in carrying out this duty, one must take heed of the following:

- 1) One must be pious, upright, God fearing and possess good character.

- 2) Sincerity: One must be genuine in his/her endeavor and the motive must always be for the sake and pleasure of Allah and out of love for His servants, not for any worldly gain and/or fame.
- 3) One must possess the basic knowledge of the Lawful and the Unlawful (halal and haram). The Messenger of Allah states, “Verily, the lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between the two of them are doubtful matters about which many people do not know...” (Bukhari and Muslim) Common Muslims may exercise forbidding the wrong on trivial prohibitions such as cheating, stealing, drinking, gambling, illicit relationships, etc., however, one should not get involved with issues of jurisprudential nature (fiqh issues). Concerns of such nature should be deferred to trained jurists and scholars.
- 4) One needs to be wise in his/her approach. Although it is a duty, it must be carried out in the most gentle and kind way to ensure good results. The prophetic approach is, “Make things easy and do not make things difficult. Give glad tidings and do not frighten them away.” (Bukhari & Muslim) Use persuasion over arguments and begin with the way the Prophet would when addressing Muslims, “O Muaz, I love you for the sake of Allah...” It is important to win the heart of the person you are addressing in order to achieve good results.
- 5) One needs to be patient. This work requires much patience. Results are in the hands of Allah. One must endure the negative reaction be it verbal or physical coming from the person one is trying to correct. Pay heed to Luqman’s golden advice to his son, “*O my dear son! Keep up the prayer; command what is right; forbid what is wrong; and bear with patience whatever befalls you. Surely, these matters require great resolve.*” (Luqman, 30:17)
- 6) Remain connected with Allah (SWT) for there is a direct connection between prayers and the noble duty of enjoining what is right and forbidding the wrong. The best way to remain connected with and seek Allah’s help is through the daily obligatory and supererogatory prayers. The Prophet (SAW) said, “The servant is closest to his Lord during prostration, so increase your supplications therein.”
- 7) Remember you are on the truth (*haq*), never surrender or reconcile with injustice, wrong and oppression (*batil*). Always pray that Allah (SWT) gives you *tawfeeq* and accepts your noble actions.

May Allah (SWT) enable us to uphold the duty of enjoining good and forbidding wrong, ameen.
