



Synopsis of Friday Sermon

Ameer Mustapha Elturk



IONA
REPENTANCE
REVITALIZATION OF FAITH
RENEWAL OF COVENANT

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon

Purity - Part 1 Purification and Glorification

Despite being unlettered, the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was endowed with a special gift. He (SAW) said, “I was given *javami' al-kalim* or the concise speech.” His gems of wisdom were concise yet comprehensive and meaningful. The following insightful hadith narrated by Abu Malik al-Ash’ari (RAA) demonstrates the Prophet (SAW)’s eloquence of speech.

The Prophet (SAW) said, “Purity is half of faith; the praise of Allah (*al-hamdulillah*) fills the scale; the glory of Allah and the praise of Allah (*subhanallah walhamdulillah*) fill together – or each fill – what is between the heavens and earth; prayer is light; charity is proof; patience is illumination; and the Qur’an is either an argument either for or against you. Everyone goes out in the morning selling himself. He either emancipates it or destroys it.”

The Prophet (SAW) concisely mentions eight gems of wisdom that can be elaborated at length; however, a simple sentence was enough to convey simple yet poignant points.

Purification

The hadith opens with the main theme of purity or purification, a subject of great importance to every Muslim. The scholars of Islam contemplated on what the Prophet (SAW) meant by, “Purity is half of faith.” Purity or cleansing may refer to both the internal spiritual and external physical state.

The internal purification is the cleansing of the heart that is the abode of *iman* and *taqwa*, from all types of polytheism (*shirk*) including pretentiousness (*riya'*) and worshipping the self (ego/caprice), and from false ideologies and beliefs. Love of this ephemeral world (*dunya*), lust, gluttony, envy, deception, and the urge to dominate are among other dreadful traits of a sick and polluted heart. Lack of trust in Allah (SWT) and doubt (*rayb*) in the hereafter are other signs of a diseased heart. These hearts can only be cleansed through prophetic supplications (*azkar*) and recitation of the Qur’an.

The external purification, on the other hand, is the cleansing of the limbs (*al-Jawarih*) that move in the direction (worship) of Allah (SWT). This external purification may be of two types, the physical and legal purity.

The physical purity is the cleansing of the body from filth, sweat and bad odor. It is also the cleansing of clothes and keeping one’s place, be it home, office, or masjid clean. Islam promotes being clean through and through. The Prophet (SAW) was instructed, “*Purify your garment, and keep away from all filth*” (*al-Muddaththir*, 74:4-5). It is important to keep in mind that although a person may be clean, he/she may not be in a state of legal purity for worship.

The legal purity are prescribed rituals of physical purification that precede acts of worship such as daily prayers,

funeral prayer, touching the Qur'an, etc. The legal purity is also of two types: purity from both minor and major impurities. The former is to be in a state of ablution (*wudu*) before getting ready to pray or doing any other act of worship that requires ablution, while the latter is to take a full bath or *ghusl* after *janabah* (sexual intercourse with one's spouse).

It can be argued that the expression, "Purity (*tubur*) is half of faith," means that ablution (*tabara-wudu*) or ritual purification is half of the salah (prayer). In the second year after migration (*hijrah*), the Prophet (SAW) was instructed to pray facing the Ka'bah in Makkah instead of Jerusalem. The change of the direction of the Qiblah left the believers skeptical, wondering if their prayers while facing Jerusalem for nearly two years were accepted. Allah (SWT) in surat al-Baqarah revealed, "God would never let your faith (prayers) go to waste, for God is most compassionate and most merciful towards people" (*al-Baqarah*, 2:143). – The word faith in the *ayah* clearly means salah (prayer) and prayer without *wudu* or *tabara* is not accepted. Thus, *tabara* or *wudu* is half of salah, consequently "Purity is half of faith."

Performing and perfecting ablution (*wudu*) or the legal purity is a means of expiation of sins. This prerequisite prepares a believer for prayer (*salah*) which is a means of cleansing the heart. According to a prominent companion, Uthman bin Affan (RAA), the Prophet (SAW) said, "Whoever perfects his *wudu*, his sins will leave his body until they fall from beneath his *fingernails*" (Muslim).

Glorification

The second gem of the Prophetic gems of wisdom is the glorification and praise of Allah (SWT). According to the hadith, "The praise of Allah (*al-hamdulillah*) fills the scale; the glory of Allah and the praise of Allah (*subhanallah walhamdulillah*) fill together – or each fill – what is between the heavens and earth."

The first statement, "The praise of Allah (*al-hamdulillah*) fills the scale," may be incomplete. Abdullah Bin Amr (RAA) in the collection of Imam al-Tirmidhi narrates a hadith that may shed more light on the statement. The Prophet (SAW) said, "Glorification (tasbih or saying Subhanallah) is half the scale and praising Allah (saying Alhamdulillah) fills it."

Saying *subhanallah* (often Muslims say *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (SWT) whenever Allah's name is mentioned,) implies that Allah (SWT) is high and above every imperfection and need. He is pure and perfect. Glorifying Allah (SWT) is half the gnosis of His majesty and magnificence. The other half is the praise of Allah or the phrase *al-hamdulillah*.

The prophetic phrase, "We have not known You as You deserve to be known," indicates that no one in the world can comprehend the Being and Essence of Allah (SWT). His perfection is beyond our limited imagination and understanding. We can only know Him through His names and attributes which is the essence and basis of our faith and belief in Allah. *Iman al-Mujmal* or the *Iman in brief* defines Iman or faith as, "I believe in Allah as He is (understood) by His names and His attributes (*asma' and sifat*)..."

For instance, no one can comprehend the extent or degree of Allah's power. It is indeed beyond our imagination, "For verily, Allah has the Power to will anything," (*al-Baqarah*, 2:20); "Do you not know that Allah has Power of everything?" (*al-Baqarah*, 2:106). His power extends beyond the physical laws of nature, "And We said, 'O fire be cool and gentle on Ibrahim'" (*al-Anbiya*, 21:69). He is so powerful, all He has to say is 'Be' and it is, "Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, 'Be', and it is! Limitless, then in His glory is He in whose hand rests the mighty dominion over all things, and unto Him you all will be brought back" (*Ya Seen*, 36:82-83).

It can also be said that His vast knowledge is beyond our perception. No one can realize the extent of His knowledge, "And Allah has full knowledge of everything" (*al-Baqarah*, 2:282). He knows our past, present and future, including our thoughts and speech that have not yet occurred. "He knows all that is in the heavens and on earth; and He knows what you conceal and what you reveal; And Allah has full knowledge of what lies hidden in the hearts (of people) (*al-Taghabun*, 64:4). Not a leaf that falls of a tree escapes His knowledge (*al-An'am*, 6:59).

Our intellect will never be able to realize the limitless attributes of Allah (SWT). He is Omniscient, Omnipotent as

well as Omnipresent, “*And He is with you wherever you may be; and Allah sees all that you do*” (*al-Hadid, 57:4*).

To understand the essence of glorification (*tasbih*), one needs to investigate the meaning of the root word of which the word *subhanallah* comes from. The trilateral root word of *tasbih*, is *Sa Ba Ha*, and *sabaha, yasabahu*, means to keep afloat, whereas, the pattern, *sabbaha, yusabbihu*, means to make something afloat. Allah (SWT) mentions this concept in surat al-Anbiya’ when He described the planets floating through space, “*Each floating (yasabun) in its orbit*” (*al-Anbiya’, 21:33*).

It may be said that *tasbih* is to keep Allah (SWT) floating at His own level. We should not bring Him down to the level of His creation, “*Allah is but One God, far exalted is He (subhanahu) above having a son, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him and sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs*” (*al-Nisa’, 4:171*). Therefore, *tasbih* is half of the gnosis of Allah or understanding the spiritual truth. The other half is *al-hamdulillah*.

The phrase “*Al-Hamdulillah*” means that all good attributes are present with Allah (SWT) to the utmost. It also connotes that all praise and *gratitude* are His alone. It is noteworthy to understand that Allah (SWT) is independent, self-sufficient, and self-praised. It was made clear that Allah (SWT) is indeed free from any need when Musa (RAA) said, “*Indeed Allah is self-sufficient and praiseworthy should you and whoever is on earth be thankless*” (*Ibrahim, 14:8*).

Hamd can only be realized when one contemplates the countless favors Allah (SWT) bestows upon His creatures. Among many bounties, He feeds, clothes, and provides for us. In fact, the entire creation was meant to be a gift for man. There are numerous ayat that explain this notion. “*(And remember that) it is Allah who created the heavens and the earth, and who sends down water from the sky and thereby brings forth [all manner] of fruits as a provision for you; and who has made ships subservient to you, so that they may sail through the sea at His behest; and has made the rivers subservient to you; and has made the sun and the moon, pursuing their courses, subservient to you; and has made the night and the day subservient to you*” (*Ibrahim, 14-32,33*). The first fourteen ayat of surat al-Nahl (16:1-14) mentions other favors. No words can ever express the magnitude of gratefulness one may have for Allah (SWT).

We can never thank Allah (SWT) enough. Among many things, we thank Him for allowing us to worship Him, the Lord and Master of the Universe, “*All praise is due to Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds*” (*al-Fatiba, 1:1*). Secondly, for guiding us to Islam, “*Praise be to Allah, who guided us to this: had it not been for His guidance, we would never have found the way*” (*al-Araf, 7:43*). Thirdly, we thank Him for His Book, the Qur’an, and His messenger, Muhammad (SAW), who showed us the way, “*Praise be to Allah, who sent down upon His messenger the Book devoid of all crookedness*” (*al-Kahf, 18:1*). Therefore, *subhanallah* and *al-Hamdulillah*, referring to the hadith, “*Tasbih is half the scale and al-Hamdulillah fills it,*” complete the scale of the gnosis of Allah (SWT).

The two statements *Subhanallah* and *al-Hamdulillah* are dearest to Allah (SWT). The Prophet (SAW) has eloquently said, “*Dearest to the most Merciful are two words (statements). They are very light on the tongue but heavy on the scale (of rewards), Subhanallah wa bihamdibi (All Glory and Praise be to Allah who is far above any imperfection or want), subhanallah al-Azim, (Glory is to Allah the Great).*” The more we comprehend Allah (SWT)’s attributes, the more we become attached to Him. The closer we get to Him, the more sincere we become.

Allah’s favors upon us are colossal. Let us give thanks to Him and keep our tongue moist with the sincere *dhikr* of Allah (SWT) while reaping the maximum blessings and rewards.

End