

NO TRUTHFULNESS WITHOUT COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Friday Sermon Presented by

Dr Mahmud Abul-Huda Al Husaini

Al 'Adiliyya Mosque, Aleppo, 16\11\2007

The Exalted Allah said:

"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin , for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing"

This verse is a starting point from the import of the event into a general benefit. From this meaning, that is meditating upon one of the details of the rules connected with the movement of the body, the Exalted Allah moved into a general benefit saying to the believer that righteousness is not to be meticulous about the mere movements of the body when one experiences any type of worship, for the body may be directed to Jerusalem, or to the Ancient House, but in both cases, the soul should be directed to the One who is Timeless and Placeless, to the One who is far above time or place.

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When the Jews and Christians objected to the changing of Al Qublah from Jerusalem into the Ancient House, argued vehemently about it and asked whether it is wiser and better for man to be directed to Jerusalem or the Honored Ka'bah, the Exalted Allah revealed the verse: "**The fools among the people will say**", and 'fools' are mindless people, "**What hath turned them from the Qiblah to which they were used?**". Then He gave an accurate answer whose wisdom and soundness the sane can understand quite well: "**Say: "To Allah belong both East and West: He guides whom He will to a Way that is straight"**" (Al Baqarah, v. 142).

When you are directed towards Jerusalem in prayer, you do that by the command of the Exalted Allah. So is the case when you are directed towards the Honored Ka'bah. Consequently, this issue is unworthy of long dispute and need not be controversial?

The verses that follow the above mentioned constitute a starting point from the event and its meaning to refer to a great common benefit. The Exalted Allah said:

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin &

for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing" (Al Baqarah, v. 177).

Thus, these verses are a starting point from the import of the event into a common benefit. The purport is to meditate upon one of the details of the rules concerning the movement of the body from which, the Exalted Allah moved on to refer to a common benefit. He, Glory be to Him, wants to say to the believer that righteousness is not in being meticulous about the mere movements of the body when one experiences or performs any type of worship.

They stirred the world and did not appease it for a very minute particle of worship about whether it is more righteous to be directed to the East or to the West.

The body may be directed to Jerusalem or to the Old House, but in both cases, the soul is directed to the One Who is Timeless and Placeless, to the One who is far above time and place.

The import is that one should not be meticulous in one single particle of worship while, in fact, he is negligent in his collective behavior in which he should be an obedient member to the commands of the Exalted Allah on all levels.

They are meticulous in whether to be directed to the East or to the West, while they oppress people and deal in usury. They are meticulous in one detail, but on the other hand, they betray, delude, and lie to people, and they distort the Exalted Allah's speech.

My aim is to study and make use of this purport and apply it to our reality.

If you enter our mosques you find some people who are meticulous in such details, but if you observe how they generally behave in society, you find them transgressors in their dealing with other people, in their manners, and in their feelings towards the others. They do not consider themselves members in an integrated society, so they violate the commands of the Exalted Allah.

The blight we suffer from in our Islamic world today is the state of individualism that prevents us from assuming the feeling of responsibility properly, a responsibility that is intrinsic in our religion, towards the human groups, community or society. As is commonly known, our main constant concern, according to the common image and concept about righteousness, is to keep on praying in the mosque. This is, as is well known, the final goal of the religious man, but if we study this concept quite well, we find that praying in the mosque should produce scientific, practical, behavioral, moral and doctrinal values, where man can be Imam and producer. He can be one who is influential and changes society to the better. Accordingly, the Exalted Allah said: **"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West"**, i.e., your concern should not be restricted to your standing in prayer and its movements as it is an individual type of worship in

which you are directed to Qublah by your bodies and to your Lord by your hearts.

Christians used to direct their churches to the sunrise, and Jews used to direct their synagogues to Jerusalem in the west.

"but it is righteousness to believe in Allah". It is true that righteousness is to believe in the Exalted Allah, but He presents details of this belief. So according to this verse, belief is not restricted to mere worship in performing prayer by directing one's face towards East or West. Righteousness, according to the Exalted Allah, is not to belong to the group of the disobedient. Righteousness is to have principles which are:

"to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers". Notice how the Exalted Allah recounts all the principles of faith. That is, righteousness is not accepted from the one who believes in Allah but does not believe in the Last Day, in angels, in the Book, or in all the other Prophets.

This verse refers to the comprehensiveness of faith, and to every principle or pillar on which one's behavior should be based. Your behavior should be build on your faith in the Last Day, and your treatment of people should be built on your faith in the Book and the Prophets.

The first part of righteousness for man is connected with belief and faith that settle in the heart. This should result in application in behavior that would have a good impact on the community. The Exalted Allah said:

- 1- **"to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin for orphans, for the needy, for the**

wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves",

2- **"to be steadfast in prayer",**

3- **"and practice regular charity",**

4- **"to fulfill the contracts which ye have made",** i.e., keeping one's covenants and be obliged to fulfill its conditions.

Then the Exalted Allah mentioned the state of being patient at times of distress and misfortune and at times of great ordeal.

Thus this verse addresses us saying:

"Oh you, who pretend to be religious, if you believe that religiousness means only prayer, then you understand religion wrongly. Your religion should be based on doctrinal and fiducial basis that should result in application in behavior.

First behavior:

"to spend of your substance, out of love for Him".

Notice that the Exalted Allah did not say only "to spend money on the one who needs it", He rather gave details to emphasize the comprehensiveness I have mentioned above, i.e., it is not a quarter or a third.

- **"for your kin",** i.e., the believer does not neglect his relatives.

-**"for orphans".** They have the right to be taken care of by society because they suffer from the adversity of losing their fathers.

-**"for the needy",** because they undergo the trial of poverty and indigence.

-**"for the wayfarer"**, even if he is rich in his country, but he is cut off from his substance while he is in the Muslim country. So the Muslims should sponsor him.

-**"for those who ask"**, i.e., whoever asks people to give him what he needs.

-**"and for the ransom of slaves"**, i.e., to emancipate man from slavery.

Thus faith should result in a feeling of collective responsibility where the believer does not forget a kin, nor an orphan, the needy, a wayfarer, or a beggar. He also spends his money on emancipating man. so he has a sense of responsibility of how to spend the money which is his own.

The one who prays in his hermitage or his mosque secluding himself from people, and cutting himself from society to be exempted from the collective responsibility, is not righteous. This verse shouts at such a type of person accusing him of not being righteous, nor to do good deeds, for society, community and the environment in which he lives, whether small or big, all have their right on him.

When one is verified by faith after which his faith leads him to assume a feeling of collective responsibility concerning the substance he owns when he makes people around him benefit from it, then he is promoted to the first step of righteousness.

Second behavior:

"to be steadfast in prayer". Last week I pointed out to the meaning of performing prayer spiritually which means

achieving prayer with its intrinsic meanings, but today, I am going to refer to another meaning of performing prayer. It is performing prayer among people, which is part of the collective responsibility. Here, we do not refer to something abstract. We rather mean collective behavioral responsibility. The Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) is a proof of this meaning. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

"There will be princes ruling you, some will know and others will deny, (i.e., some will do good deeds and others will adopt abomination). Whoever loathes their deeds (i.e., the Muslims) will be acquitted, and whoever denies (their deeds) will be saved, but whoever accepts and follows them will perish with the irredeemable.

They said: 'Shall we fight them'.

He said: 'No, as long as they perform prayer'."

Does 'performing prayer' mean 'only pray' on the individual level?

No. It rather means they should be the means of making people perform prayer in society, and they protect performing prayer. The Prophet (PBUH) mentioned 'princes' in his Hadith, and usually the ruler is one, so the meaning of sponsoring prayer in society is to form a group of people that will sponsor prayer with all its connotations and they protect this performance as well.

Another version of the Hadith is:

"There will be princes ruling you who will make (people's) hearts feel secure and (their) skins soften, then there will be princes who will make (people's)

hearts loathe them and (their) skins tremble. They asked:

'Oh, Messenger of Allah, shall we fight them?'

He said: 'No, as long as they perform prayer'."

The responsibility of performing prayer is not restricted to princes only. In fact, this is one of its supporting factors. Performing collective prayer is one of the tasks of Al Ummah, the society, and the nation. This can be best explained in the message sent by the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) to Malek Ibn Ahmar, when he said:

"In the name of Allah, most Gracious most Merciful. This is a message from Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to Malek Ibn Ahmar and the Muslims who follow him. It is security for them as long as they perform prayer."

The Prophet (PBUH) used to recommend his armies that went for Jihad saying:

"If you reach a village and hear Azan (call for prayer) announced in it, get away from it" (i.e., do not fight its people).

In the above mentioned, performing prayer does not mean verifying the meanings of prayer and its construction, such as humbleness, feeling peacefulness and meditating on its meanings. It rather refers to the legitimate politics and collective behavior of prayer where princes are part of it, and people are the other part. In this concern, prayer is a ritual represented by its Azan, in announcing it and in the congregation of the praying people in the mosque. It is a ritual that indicates that this

country is the place where prayer is performed. A place of servitude to the Exalted Allah. It is a place where the statement " Messenger of Allah, peace be upon you, " is said. The Messenger in this statement is our Master. Muhammad (PBUH). Though Messengers of Allah are plenty, but in our prayer we address our Prophet, peach be upon him. It is a military greeting to the unique Imam who is the Imam of all the world. The Imam for whom all the earth is made a mosque. The people who cannot have this feeling are free to have their own opinion, but we do have our own.

Though we are certain of the Imamate of our Master, Muhammad (PBUH), we do feel pity towards those ignorant people because they are deprived of that affiliation. We do not coerce people into believing, but we are proud of our faith. So we present military greetings to our Imam, Muhammad (PBUH) even in prayer.

So, performing prayer in the above mentioned has a common behavioral meaning.

To sum up, righteousness is not attained only by performing prayer and feeling that you have a sound heart and obedient body. Righteousness, as is stated in the holy Qur'an, is that the state of belief that fills the heart with faith, should result in: first, feeling of a collective financial responsibility; secondly, participation in collective worship to announce affiliation through rituals.

Third behavior:

"and practice regular charity". As you know, charity is a legislation ordained by the Exalted Allah to support community.

Thus, as mentioned above, the Exalted Allah said: "**spend of your substance**" to stir people's zeal to achieve social solidification and have collective feeling, because Zakat is decreed and has its own channel of expenditure, but "**to spend of your substance**" is a process of setting a renaissance. It is the foundation on which renaissance is built.

The members of society that spend their money on charity out of the circle of Zakat are hoped to be the means of building up a renaissance, but the ones who do not do that are hopeless of achieving that benefit.

I have told you formerly about my visits to many countries where I found people donate the church 12% out of their income. This amount is taken from their personal account willingly and without asking their permission. I also found in some Islamic countries people pay 5% out of their income, 2.5% for Zakat, and 2.5% for charity. They pay that amount with enthusiasm without any coercion. They compete with one another in paying that amount. This was what I witnessed with my own eye, the fact which made me understand the cause of making this country developed socially in that Muslim country.

"Give not unto the foolish (what is in) your (keeping of their) wealth, which Allah hath given you to maintain" (Al Nisa', v. 5)

When wealth is not collected at this rate out of the circle of Zakat, constructive projects will never be achieved in a society that neglects "**spend of your substance**".

Notice how the Exalted Allah mentioned charity before Zakat. If He mentioned prayer then He mentioned "**spend**

of your substance", I would say that the Exalted Allah mentioned an obligation, then an optional deed came after. But in this verse, He mentioned **"spend of your substance"** before mentioning the obligation of Zakat to show that its importance is no less than that of the obligation of Zakat. It is rather more important than it.

Fourth behavior:

"to fulfill the contracts which ye have made". The Muslim is the one who keeps up his covenants.

When fidelity, keeping up one's covenants and one's promise spread in society, this society becomes honest. But when Muslims break up their covenants, they no more represent the identity of the true Muslim.

-Amongst them are men who made a Covenant with Allah, that if He bestowed on them of His bounty, they would give (largely) in charity, and be truly amongst those who are righteous.

-But when he did bestow of his Bounty, they became covetous, and turned back (from their Covenant), averse (from its fulfillment).

-So he hath put as a consequence hypocrisy into their hearts, (to last) till the day whereon they shall meet him: because they broke their Covenant with Allah, and because they lied (again and again.

-Know they not that Allah doth know their secret (thoughts) and their secret counsels, and that Allah knoweth well all things unseen?" (Al Tawbah, vs. 75-78).

After referring to the above mentioned principles, the Exalted Allah mentions the state which makes these principles continue. How many the states are when people become enthusiastic to give charity after listening to a sermon or when they feel a state of faith in certain circumstances, but when this state elapses, men change. Therefore, the Exalted Allah presents what guarantees the continuity and steadfastness of this fiducial state. It is to be patient in all circumstances.

Thus faith produces the four principles then it enclose them with the fence of patience. The Exalted Allah said: **"and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic"**.

This verse helps you to be steadfast. So do not give up applying it in any condition.

-"Such are the people of truth". True people are not those who seclude themselves in hermitages away from the collective responsibility they should hold. Those who assume the collective responsibility are the people of truth. But those who think that worship is only a relationship between the servant and his Lord away from the others and society are untrue, even if they imagine themselves to be religious.

"Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing"

This verse makes the one who lives in individualism have an earthquake. It should change his state. But the one who insists on living in his hermitage and his own individualism, the one who insists on keeping away from common relationships with other people, and understands religion to be an individual state, should read this lesson

frequently and repeatedly, so that, one day, he might understand the meaning of righteousness.

"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing" (Al Baqarah, v. 177).

Allahum..., guide us to You favorably, and make us from those who listen to wisdom and follow the best of it.

I say my words and ask Allah's forgiveness.