

**“...Until they change what is in their own selves”**

**Friday Khutbah (12 May 2006) delivered by Shaykh Muhammad Taher**

**DISCLAIMER: This reminder was originally delivered in Arabic. Any meanings lost in translation are not to be attributed to the speaker as reminders are translated by volunteers. The mosque has no official translator and volunteers often have no formal qualifications to translate on the day. Please forgive any errors as they are from our human weakness and any right guidance is from God.**

God says in Surat ar-Ra'ad: 13:11

**“God does not change the condition of people until they change what is in themselves”**

O Muslims-

This verse tells us just how we can deal with the crisis that we find ourselves in, and treat the disease that continues to afflict us. Days, years and decades pass us by and yet we continue suffering from disasters.

This verse confirms that such disasters stem from our looking to others to improve our condition rather than taking this responsibility ourselves.

This verse reminds us that we are always in need of God and that we are always subject to the universal laws of God on which life depends. God has placed a system in the universe- this system is His way of dealing with nations and peoples. God states:

“Such has been the Sunnah [the practice] of God in the past; and you shall find no change in the practice of God” (Surah Fath 48:23)

Every outcome depends upon set pre-conditions fixed by this underlying system that God describes in various places in the Qur'an:

“Shall the reward of good be anything but good?” (Surah Rahman 55:60)

“If you do good, you do good for your own soul, but if you do evil you do it against your own souls” (Surah Isra 17:7)

“Whoever does good it is for his own soul and whoever does bad it is against his own soul: your Lord is never unjust with His creatures” (Surah Fussilat 41:46)

This system also includes the rule that:

**“God does not change the condition of people until they change what is in themselves  
but if He [God] wills harm on a people, no one can ward it off,  
apart from Him they have no protector” (Surah Ra'ad 13:11)**

This rule describes communities that have not abided by the Divine decree that has come to all of humanity. Instead they are:

- heedless of the Divine decree

- lazy or too weak to implement it and
- do not deal with their means to strive for higher levels with it.

This verse also implies that changing communities is not going to be easy, but it will require hard work.

Looking closer, you can find three stages for achieving this:

1. We begin by coming to terms with the **reality**- recognising, and feeling that there is a need for improvement and change. The condition of the individual, of his community and humanity as a whole has collapsed. It has become static and there is weakness in correct behaviour [Deen], belief [Imaan] and character [Akhlaq].
2. Next we look to ourselves for **effort** - that comes from emotion and feelings – such efforts serve as a reminder of the need to improve, to correct and to change to that which is better and straight; to steadfastness with the instructions of God the Most High and His messenger (pbuh).
3. Finally we **address** our individual condition before anything else. We look at our condition with God the Most High. We look at our condition with our behaviour [Deen], our belief [Iman], our character [Akhlaq]. And we remove those characteristics within us, which are corrupt, and change them into characteristics which are good.

#### 1. Reflecting upon our reality

When God says: **“God does not change the condition of people until they change what is in themselves”**

There is a warning that changing the condition of your own self is not as easy as we may think it to be. It is not through external instruction and reminders alone that a person changes. There is no institution, country or system that can change the human soul, rather it is something that is inside a person that enables him to change - changes his aims, his beliefs, his stand, his behaviour and understanding.

A person only changes and improves his condition when his mind becomes enlightened and rejuvenated. He strengthens his willpower, motivation and determination, when he purifies his own self and practices good etiquettes and is polite in his manner.

O Muslims- unfortunately the state of the Muslim today is that he has become selfish. His concern is just about what will bring him benefit and pleasure, not the neighbourhood he lives in, nor the state of the country he lives in, nor of the condition of humanity as a whole. This person is a slave of himself. A slave to what will make him feel better than others, wealthier and more respected.

#### 2. Making efforts to change

So when God says: **“God does not change the condition of people until they change what is in themselves”** we should look for an example in the Prophet (pbuh) for how to strive for change.

The first thing the Prophet (pbuh) began with in his mission was to build sound and balanced individuals who dealt with justice; individuals who knew the balance between the spiritual and material - between Deen and Dunya.

The Prophet (pbuh) freed people from associating Lords with God that caused people to be confused. He (pbuh) freed them from the whims of ignorance and inscribed the creed of belief in one God in their hearts. He (pbuh) instilled within them steadfastness with the commandments of God and the most noble manners. These are some of the constituents with which the Prophet (pbuh) constructed the first generation of Muslims.

The condition of that generation was to show patience in the face of tests, gratitude when given something, resoluteness in both good and bad times, when facing great difficulty spreading the message, establishing a state and raising the whole of mankind. This was the real success. And the Prophet (pbuh) achieved it in the hearts of this generation to make them the best of humanity.

Following an (1) examination of our reality and a recognition that by God's words - **"God does not change the condition of people until they change what is in themselves"**, we are required to (2) exert efforts and finally we must:

### 3. Address our individual condition

Our disease consists of weakness in faith, abandonment of good manners and etiquettes. We are in need of a new spirit, a new life to transform us and mankind, a spirit that can perhaps give birth to us anew. A people who are good will reflect this upon their outlook on life and their activities, who are good in their dealing in Deen and Imaan, who progress and get results, a people who are not driven by selfishness, their lusts, whims or desires but instead think about others and prefer the goodness of the community over their own.

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Maybe a new generation will come from amongst us. A generation that is:

- not selfish,
- not in disarray,
- not lazy,
- not weak,
- not deficient,
- not dragging its feet,
- not bad mannered,
- not falling into the disobedience of God repeatedly.

This new people would magnify the Divine decree, fear God, be mindful of Him in public and in private, a generation that would love God and His Messenger and would be concerned about changing their own selves as well as their community and humanity as a whole. God says of them and you:

"If you turn away He will replace you with other people; who will not be like you"