

Those who compete to do good

Friday Khutbah (23-03-07) **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 the Most High says:

"Then We gave the Scripture to Our chosen servants: some of them wronged their own souls, some stayed between [right and wrong] and some, by God's permission, were the foremost in good deeds." (Fatir 35:32)

Brothers and sisters-Those who have been mentioned in this verse are different types of people from this community (Ummah). It is this community that has been given the gift of His Book, the gift of revelation and He has selected the best amongst them- Muhammad Bin Abdullah SAW, to be His final messenger.

From amongst this community, three types can be distinguished:

- the one who oppresses himself. He commits sins and lacks in performing his obligations.
- the one who does the basics- that which is required of him from the obligations and does not commit unlawful acts, and that is as far as it goes.
- the one who competes in doing good deeds. This person does more than just the obligations required, he or she will do deeds that are recommended, and will not only refrain from unlawful acts but also stays away from that which is doubtful or disliked; fearing that it may lead to harm although it is not harmful in itself.

O Muslims

Islam encourages people to be from the type of people who compete in doing good deeds. It encourages a person to be good and refrain from doing that which is unlawful, to undertake doing good and desiring to do that which is voluntary or extra. It requires a person to be 'alive', in the sense that he uses his mind and benefits others through his ideas and intellect, has strong motivation, is a steadfast person with good characteristics and one who is good to others and protects his faith. It encourages a person be a benefit to society, a slave to his Lord, kind to his environment and a carrier of God's message.

The following verse in the Holy Qur'an beautifully describes what is needed for the Muslim believer:

"True believers are those whose hearts tremble with fear when God is mentioned, whose faith increases when His revelations are recited to them, who put their trust in their Lord, who keep up the prayers and give to others from what We provide for them. Those are the ones who truly believe." (Anfal 8:2-4)

And when describing the servants of the Merciful, God says:

"The servants of the Lord of mercy are those who walk humbly on the earth and who, when the foolish address them, reply peace; those who spend the night bowed down or standing worshipping their Lord" (Furqan 25:63-4)

God (swt) describes those who are God-conscious and doers of good in Surah Dhariyat:

"They will receive their Lords gifts because of the good they did before: sleeping only little at night, praying at dawn for God's forgiveness, giving a rightful share of their wealth to the beggar and the deprived" (Dhariyat 61:16-19)

And when describing the righteous God says in Surah Insan:

"They fulfil their vows; they fear a day of widespread woes; they give food to the poor, the orphan and the captive, though they love it themselves saying we feed you for the sake of God alone, we seek neither recompense nor thanks from you. We fear the day of our Lord - a dreadful day" (Insan 76:7-10)

God (swt) said in the words of the Prophet (SAW) i.e. Hadith Qudsi:

"My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees..."

This is what this religion wants from you O Muslim, and this is how we should be.

However, we see many people who stay away from reaching these high levels, which Islam asks us to aspire to, and they leave that which is required of them and commit mistakes and sins; this is because humans were not created pure as the angels were, nor are they free of sins as the Prophets were. We are in fact made of two elements: a handful of earth and spirit from the Divine.

If the basic earthly aspect dominates a person, you find that the person answers the call of his desires.

And if the spiritual aspect dominates a person then they respond to what the religion (asks of them), they are humble in front of their Lord God and their actions are good and sound.

God (swt) says:

"By the soul and how He formed it and inspired it (to know) its own rebellion and piety! The one who purifies his soul succeeds and the one who corrupts it fails" (Shams 91:7-10)

So, it is no wonder that the children of Adam sin and make mistakes for our father Adam did make a mistake before us. When God (swt) caused both Adam and Eve (Hawwa) to live in Paradise, they were both commanded to eat whatever fruit they wished from any tree except one-they were forbidden the fruit of this tree and Shaitan still managed to misguide them and tempt them to eat the forbidden fruit until they fell into the unlawful.

"...Thus did Adam disobey His Lord and fall into error..." (Taha 20:121)

But God (swt) did not leave them in that state of disobedience; instead, He opened for them the doors to His mercy and forgiveness and facilitated the means for them to purify themselves from his error:

"Later His Lord brought him close, accepted his repentance and guided him" (Taha 20:122)

"Then Adam received some words from his Lord and He accepted his repentance - He is most relenting, most merciful" (Baqarah 2:37)

Yes, dear brothers and sisters, this is the Islamic view of how people should be-they should be a good and pure example. But at the same time, they should not forget the reality which people live in and the effects of daily life on us. We should not forget the natural human nature of people. It is for this reason that Islam tries to raise you to higher degrees of faith (Iman) and increase you, it seeks to better your character so that you can be from amongst the people who have great ambitions and goals in life. Islam wants you to be from those who race to do good and compete with each other to do deeds that God (swt) will be pleased with.

"So race for forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden as wide as the Heavens and earth, prepared for those who believe in God and His messengers: that is

God's bounty which he gives to whoever He pleases. God is the owner of great bounty" (Al-Hadid 57:21)

Islam does not deal with people as though they are angels, but instead treats them as humans- who eat, who walk the streets, who have desires, who receive whisperings from the shaitan and then make mistakes. But one should not lose hope in the mercy of God as only those who are disbelievers lose hope in God. God (swt) has opened for us the door to forgiveness and repentance- to repent to God and be sorry for sins and mistakes removes them, it is as though they were not their to begin with (All of the children of Adam make mistakes, and the best of those who make mistakes are those who repent and ask for forgiveness)

We have been given many occasions through acts of worship where sins can be removed; such as wiping out a bad deed with a good one, wudu (ablution) , prayer, giving in charity, fasting, performing Hajj and Umrah, remembering God and making du'a- supplications.

The Prophet (saw) said: "between one jumrah to the next jumrah, between the five daily prayers and between one Ramadan to the next Ramadan there is forgiveness for what lies in between, if no major sins are committed" (Muslim)

Dear servants of God, be people who race with each other to do good deeds and be conscious of God and He will be with you, get to know God in your good times and He will know you in your bad times. Seek forgiveness for your sins and hope for the mercy of God, indeed the mercy of God is near at hand for the doers of good.