Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on July 3, 2015

Master Supplication for Forgiveness

An open invitation to repentance is issued in the Qur’an. By way of command, Allah (SWT) instructs, “O you who believe! Repent to Allah sincerely” (al-Tahrim, 66:8). The Arabic word for repentance is “tawbah.” It is derived from the root word taba which literally means to return.

Anyone who makes tawbah is in essence returning back to Allah (SWT) with the intent to mending his/her ways in return for forgiveness. Hence, O believers! Return to your Lord sincerely and remorsefully.

In conjunction with the ayah mentioned above, the Prophet (SAW) informed us of a beautiful supplication that guarantees forgiveness and Paradise. Who would not want to go to Paradise? We all beg for Allah’s mercy and hope to be among the dwellers of Paradise. Shaddad Ibn Aws (RAA) shares the prophetic supplication known as “Sayyidul Istighfar” or “the Master Supplication for Forgiveness.”

“The Master Supplication for Forgiveness is to say, ‘O Allah! You are my Lord! There is no god except You. You created me and I am Your slave, and I shall honor Your covenant and fulfill my promise to You as much as I can. I seek refuge in You from all the evil deeds I have committed. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So forgive me, for nobody can forgive sins except You.'” [sahih al-Bukhari]

The Prophet (SAW) commented, “If anybody recites it during the day with firm faith in it, and dies on the same day before the evening, he will be from the people of Paradise; and if somebody recites it at night with firm faith in it, and dies before the morning, he will be from the people of Paradise.”

If one were to sincerely invoke this supplication daily, one is guaranteed paradise. We must realize that it is not the mere uttering of the words that qualifies one admittance to Paradise. It is to be fully conscious of what is being uttered. It is to say it, “with firm faith in it,” with absolute certainty that if you are repenting sincerely, Allah will indeed forgive you.

The supplication begins with the statement, “O Allah! You are my Lord (Rubb).” The statement is not only an acknowledgement and recognition of God as our Master but also acceptance. We accept Allah (SWT) as our Lord (Rubb), Master, Sustainer and Nourisher. This constitutes the concept of “Oneness in Authority, (tawheed al-rububiyyah-Lordship).” The second statement “There is no god except You,” deals with the concept of “Oneness in Divinity, (tawheed al-uluhiyyah-Godship).” The statement implies that He alone is to be worshipped.

Tawheed al-uluhiyyah-Godship in essence is to single out Allah (SWT) as the only deity in truth worthy of worship and similarly, tawheed al-rububiyyah-Lordship is to single out Allah as the only Master in truth worthy of our obedience. Worship and obedience to God out of love and reverence for Him is the Islamic
The next statement demonstrates the status of humans in relation to their Master, “You created me and I am Your slave.” We acknowledge that our parents are the means of our creation. In truth, it is Allah (SWT) who created us and as we acknowledge this fact we must be reminded that we are owned by Him, hence, we are His slaves. In other words, we are to submit to and obey our Master unconditionally, willingly or unwillingly. True humble slaves of Allah submit to and obey Allah (SWT) out of love for their Creator.

The word slave may denote a negative connotation when used in relationship to humans, however, the title “slave” is the most honored title in the sight of Allah (SWT). Every Prophet and Messenger of Allah was described as a slave of Allah. The first words uttered by Jesus (AS) in his cradle were, “I am the slave of Allah” (Maryam, 19:30). To earn such a title is not easy. One must struggle hard to become a true humble slave of Allah.

After accepting our status with the Creator we confirm, “I shall honor Your covenant and fulfill my promise to You as much as I can.” One may inquire, what covenant and promise? The covenant is the heavenly “Covenant of Alast.” The spirits of all humans (past, present and future) were present before Allah (SWT) much before the creation of the universe. While assembled like conscripted soldiers, Allah (SWT) then asked, “Am I not Your Lord?” The entire congregation in one voice replied, “Indeed, You are, we bear witness” (al-A’raf, 7:172).

It is noteworthy to know that all humans in this world are being tested on the basis of the great heavenly covenant of Alast. So, when one says, “I shall honor Your covenant,” it simply means that Allah (SWT) is my Lord and I shall do my very best to carry out my duties toward my Master while obeying His commands and living a righteous and honorable life.

Similarly, when we affirm, “and fulfill my promise to You,” one must be cognizant of the promise he/she is making with Allah (SWT). What is that promise? Believers who perform the daily prayers are reminded of the promise we make with Allah (SWT). In each of the seventeen units (rak’ahs) we perform daily, after praising Allah (SWT), “Praise be to the Lord of the Worlds, the most Merciful, Ever Compassionate, the Owner of the Day of Reckoning,” we promise; “You alone we worship (and obey), and to You alone we turn for help” (al-Fatiha, 1:5).

Again, we promise to worship and obey our Lord, Allah (SWT) sincerely and out of love for Him. To be true to one’s promise, one must do his/her very best to fulfill the pledge at all times. We shall always seek help from none other than Allah (SWT), simply because we are certain that Allah (SWT) has power over everything. The Prophet (SAW) taught us to seek Allah’s help even if one needs shoe laces. We must be completely dependent on Him.

There is no harm in asking others for help but only when it pertains to matters that belong to this physical world. Conscious believers turn to Allah (SWT) for help prior to turning to people because they know that it is Allah who is in charge and it is He who will facilitate for us the means to get helped.

As for matters that deal with the supernatural realm or the unseen, the only source of assistance is Allah (SWT) simply because He alone is the knower of the unseen. The Prophet (SAW) taught us a special dua for such assistance. It is called Dua’ al-Istikharah (seeking goodness from Allah). Hence, “and to You alone we turn for help.”

Therefore we pray, ‘I will faithfully and to the best of my ability keep my pledge and promise to You. I shall do my very best to worship and obey You and I will need your help O Allah!’
After re-affirming our promise we seek refuge in Him, “I seek refuge in You from all the evil deeds I have committed.” As humans who are not immune to sin or evil, each person by his/her own right is a sinner and we seek refuge in Him from the evil of our deeds.

As grateful humble slaves of Allah (SWT), we acknowledge all favors and bounties of Allah, “I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me.” In other words, I could not have sustained myself without your great bounties. You have given me good health, a family, a job, a car, a house, etc. If we were to count the blessings of Allah (SWT) we would never be able to tally them.

Just as we acknowledge Allah’s blessings, we say, “I confess to You all my sins. So forgive me, for nobody can forgive sins except You.” We must keep in mind that this is a supplication made in private. Who are we going to hide our sins from? Certainly not Allah (SWT), for He knows everything about each and every one of us. Confessing one’s sins in private with Allah (SWT) is a sign of humility. With one’s head bowed down, remorseful of the sins committed, one begs Allah (SWT), “O Allah! FORGIVE ME,” because no one can forgive sins except You. Allah (SWT) is the ultimate and final Judge and only He can pardon.

‘O Allah! You are my Lord! There is no god except You. You created me and I am Your slave, and I shall honor Your covenant and fulfill my promise to You as much as I can. I seek refuge in You from all the evil deeds I have committed. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So forgive me, for nobody can forgive sins except You.”

Saying the dua faithfully in the morning and evening with absolute certainty that Allah is listening to us can only increase our chances for Paradise, according to the Prophet (SAW).

What’s extraordinary about this dua is that the faithful believer invoking it becomes extremely cautious about his/her actions and deeds performed. One becomes more conscious of the consequences of one’s actions and feels compelled to remain on the straight path. Otherwise, saying the dua and acting contrary to the promises made therein is a sign of hypocrisy. It is only a mere lip service. One may be utterly disappointed to find his/her seat among “the hypocrites in the lowest depths of Hell, and you will find no one to help them” (al-Nisa’, 4:145).

Sincere repentance is proof of one’s faithfulness to Allah (SWT). One can easily verify whether his/her repentance is genuine or not. A believer who meets the five pre-conditions is indeed on the right track.

The first condition is for one to acknowledge his/her sins just as mentioned in the dua, “I confess my sins.” This is the humility part of sincere repentance. One is not being arrogant.

The second condition is regret. One must feel truly sorry and have a sense of remorse and regret in one’s heart for the bad and evil deeds committed in the past.

The third condition is to ask for forgiveness frequently. One must always ask for forgiveness from his/her Lord for what one committed. The Prophet (SAW) used to say daily 100 times, “My Lord! Forgive and pardon me, Indeed you are the Oft-Returning with compassion (Tawwab), ever merciful (Rahim).”

The fourth condition is to leave the sin immediately. Regardless of what type of sin and unto whom it is being committed one must stop sinning immediately. One must do his/her very best to leave sins behind and have deep faith that Allah is going to help. One must not give up.

And finally, the fifth condition is to refrain from returning to the sin. One must make a firm resolve never to return back to the sin. Fulfilling these conditions qualify the believer to receive Allah’s Grace and Mercy.

In addition to the good news the Prophet (SAW) informed in the hadith of the “Master Supplication for For-
giveness,” Allah (SWT) assures the believers success for their sincerity in returning faithfully back to Him. “O you who believe! Turn to Allah in sincere repentance. Your Lord may well cancel your bad deeds for you and admit you into Gardens graced with flowing streams, on a Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet or those who have believed with him. With their lights streaming out ahead of them and to their right, they will say, ‘Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us: You have power over everything’” (al-Tahrim, 66:8).

There can be no better time than now while enjoying the blessings of Ramadan to learn, memorize and invoke the dua of “Sayyid al-Istighfar” daily while genuinely migrating to Allah (SWT). Al-Hamdulillah, we have the complete guidance. How can one go wrong?