

December 19, 2008

Khutbah

Title: [Contemplate the Power That You Have Over Others](#)

DVD title: Contemplate the Power We Have and Its Responsibility:
How do We Exert that Power over Others?

(*Du'ās*). Allah reveals in Suratu-l-Fātir, reminding us:

Surely, it is Allah who sends the winds bearing moisture that rises as a cloud, then leads it to the dead earth and revives it like after her death, like this is the resurrection from the dead.

Whoever is it that wants power and glory should know that all might and all power belongs to Allah. Good words rise up from Him and He raises virtuous actions to Himself. But whoever plots evil deeds, terrible punishment awaits and the plotting of such people shall come to nothing. (35:10)

Again in the same *sūrah*, He says tells us about “**people who swore solemn oaths by Allah, that if a warner came to them they would be guided more than the previous communities. But when a warner did come to them, his message only increased their aversion.**” (35:42) He goes on and says,

In their utter ignorance on earth and their plotting of evil. But the evil plot only encompasses they who make it. Can they then expect anything save the pattern of the previous people? You will never find

any change in the pattern of Allah, nor will you find in the pattern of Allah any alteration. (35:43)

Today we live in a world where many people vie for and exert power over other human beings. In some strange way, thinking that's their, right, their entitlement, and their duty. They do it even in the name of Allah Swt—many, unfortunately, who claim to be of our community. We see many of those who claim to be and exalt the fact that they are of another community, be they Christian or Jewish, do that. Yet, Allah warns us very clearly in these and many other ayat that the only power lies in Allah. *Lā hawla wa lā quwwata illā billāhi-l-'aliyyi-l-adhīm*. I'd like to take a few minutes today to ponder this; and the way we individually confirm, affirm, or deny that we have power over others, over circumstances, or over nature.

Take some time today and contemplate who it is who is set below us; who it is we exert power over. See, if in your contemplative moments, you feel any sense of obligation to Allah Swt, or any humility, or any sense of awe to know how far your humility or awe may be from the truth. When I say “power” I'm not just talking about overt, gross, raw power as people exert in war or in physical power over others. But how you influence others; maybe how you invoke fear in them. Maybe how you influence others by your moods, by your affect, by what you offer and the cost you put on what you offer, by what you withhold and the price you ask for your withholding.

Children, too, need to contemplate that: what words you use, what power you have over other children, perhaps, or even over your own parents by your attitude and your moods. What power [do] you have over your friends, or you think you have? Do you realize Allah Swt really has power over you? [Do you realize] why Allah Swt would allow you to have such power? What does that mean, that He allows you to have such power? It's

an important reality, this power. Allah talks about the schemers in Suratu-t-Tāriq.

By the heavens and by what comes at night, what can explain to you what comes by night? There is no soul but that has a guardian over it. So let man consider from what he is created, created from a gushing fluid issuing from between the loins and the pelvic arch. Truly He is able to bring back life on the Day when all secrets shall be laid bare.
(86:1-10)

Then He goes on...

By the heaven and the rain and by the earth bursting forth, truly it is a decisive word, not idle talk. Lo, they are scheming; but I am planning. So give respite to those who are covering the truth. Bear with them for a while. Let them think what they will think, and do what they will do. I am the planner. (86:11-17)

You have to contemplate what the reality is of the power we think we have over others, and that we exert over others. Contemplate that. It's a very simple message. It's about good words and doing good things, of course, and about doing affirmations that we hopefully believe, that all power belongs to Allah. It's very hard to do good work, or recognize good works when one is miserable, self-centered, oppressed or oppressing. It's very hard to have good words if you are unhappy or sad. It's very difficult to have good words if you don't have good thoughts, or if are being defensive and protecting yourself, or if you are protecting what you believe your entitlements are. Most of us don't spend a lot of time analyzing our attitudes, our moods, our words, our conditions, or even our health. We talk about them and live them and project those ideas, words, and attitudes; and in doing that, we control people and have power over them. We manipulate

circumstances and individuals.

We don't often see the causal relationship between our intention and our words. Nor do we necessarily see a causal relationship between our grief and misery, our power or how we approach circumstance that will apparently cause of grief and misery, thinking that we have such power over them that they can't affect us. All around the world today, people are miserable. In our country, people are miserable because of war, greed, fear, because of people who are wielding power or trying to. If that power is wielded without humility, it can only bring distress. People aren't standing up saying, "I'd better see what of this I brought on myself before I start blaming anyone else." If we dare remind people that they may be oppressors of their own selves, they resent it.

They aren't willing to see the causal relationship between their own misery today and what they wrought on themselves and others, whether it is corporate raiders on Wall Street, or people in the automotive industry; or whether it is the greedy people who are subjugating others to their greed anywhere in the world, let alone the political issues that are behind it, couched in spirituality or some other social good. When we are angry, in America we have this expression, "I'm really sore!" We are. We feel pain, as if you hurt your muscles or your body. We create soreness, illness. When people are upset when they are sick, we say they bellyache. They make themselves sick. When we are upset, we bellyache. Our stomach actually aches. We are happy one moment, sad the next. We are healthy one moment, sick the next. We are like leaves being blown around by the breeze. One day it is cold, the next day warm. So many people now have flu and colds.

This is the natural course of things; but they are also symbolic. It shows us who has the power. It shows us Who has the power. Allah has the power to keep us well or make us sick. Allah has the power to give us strength or make us sore, to give us peace or anger.

What we have is the power to be responsible. We have to learn how to respond to the circumstances around us in some way other than a semi-conscious, immediate, uncontrollable emotional urge or response. Somehow, those uncontrollable emotional responses do a lot more to support illness, misery, sorrow, and the problems a person has than to create any kind of goodness, happiness, health, or well - being. The good changes that should come about, should come about in the consciousness of the human being come from good thoughts and good words. Allah tells us that good words ascend to Allah. Misery, sorrow, unhappiness, difficulties attack the lower self. They stay low. They really don't even affect most people whose minds are not focused. The nafs so embraces these negative attitudes and holds us down so strongly that we don't notice. We take it as the norm.

The message today is a simple one: if we want to remember what it was like in the moment of our awakening in this world; if we want to capture, re-capture the moment of our soul's awakening, just before the consciousness of the spirit changes into the blank mind of the baby, ready to be re-integrated into the world; if we want to remember what the heart has the capacity to truly understand and truly feel in the love that can only be expressed in the love of Allah Swt, then we have to stop trying to believe that we exert power. We have to see that whatever power we do exert is humbly exerted and mercifully exerted and with compassion. I venture to say that one or two of us in this room fail at that—that means, one other person than me. That power can be used for good. It's rainy today, chilly. We come out of the Masjid and see that the children don't have their hats on. We say, "Please zip up your jacket and cover your head." That's a good power; because the intention is good. There is love there, wisdom, experience, and knowledge. Now, one brother or sister walks out of the *masjid*, and it's rainy, chilly, and cold. You concern yourself and say, "You really ought to cover your head. I don't want you to get sick, so many people are sick."

“No, no, no. I’m all right! Thank you.” There is no intention of doing it. *Nafs ammāra* says, “Oh, don’t tell me what to do. Do you think I’m a child, that I don’t know? I’m 27 years old. I’m 47 years old. Why are you telling me this?” The power can be there to influence someone for the good, but the power can be disrupted by the *nafs ammāra*. Perhaps the brother is a very pious person, and you are a Hadith scholar. He comes out of the *masjid* and you say, “Ya brother, the Prophet Mohammed said,” and you quote a *hadith* about protecting your health. “Oh, thank you brother, I’ll do that,” because it is from the words of Prophet Mohammed (sal) and you can’t argue with him. It’s the same truth. And we are supposed to learn from the Prophet and model his behavior. We are encouraged to think like the Prophet (sal). But... it has to come from a Sahih Hadith for this brother to do it, or from Qur’an.

Power meets resistance. We know that real people of faith should be at peace with each other. That is a no-brainer, whether they are Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, or whoever. People of real faith should be at peace with one another. They should live in peace. They should strive for peaceful means to deal with difficulties. They should affirm that the peace is the most balanced center point in life; therefore, anyone at the extreme should be brought to the center or removed from the mainstream. At the same time, those same people don’t want to hear about where that belief and peace comes from. A Christian evangelical doesn’t want to hear about peace from the Muslim, because the Muslim is “not a believer in Jesus.” Of course we are. And we are “going to go to hell.” Some Muslims don’t want to hear about peace from the Christian, because the Christians have missed the boat and don’t believe in the revelation of Qur’an and some believe disdain it. We don’t want to hear about where their concept of peace comes from, even though we believe in the same Torah and the same Injil, because there is no communication.

How can people who are so disingenuous, who cannot honestly talk and broker the conflicts they have, and have a real vested interest in peace, not discuss peace with one another? Yet, these are the very same people who think they are endowed by their Creator with the unalienable right to force others to do what they want to do. Not that all people are created equal. The same people believe they have the power to oppress others, to deny others' rights. Allah Swt promises the power of health, the power of wealth, the power of prosperity, the power of peace, the power of knowledge, tolerance, and compassion. These are all promises of Allah made over millenniums. But it's only when we have no humility that we think somehow there are different kinds of power: my power, your power, that other person's power. Those powers have to fight with one another. Isn't it amazing, when we just take the time to contemplate this, the power we have over others, and the power others have over us, and the power that people have that they try to wield. Take a few moments to think about how ridiculous it all is. Yet society is built on it.

Allah gives us an organ in our body that has the capacity to fight off greed, fears, doubts, and to fight off even illnesses. It can fight off emotional diseases. He has given us an organ to stimulate health and well being. That is our heart. It can powerfully fight against grief, misery, and sorrow. It only works when we use it as we turn it toward Allah. It's like an electrical connection. The current exists, and when the switch gets turned so it matches the source, then the current flows. When we turn our heart toward Allah, then the power of Allah comes through our heart toward others. When we isolate our heart from circumstances and wield the power of the *nafs/ego*, then there is only misery, sorrow, destruction, and greed, and a sense of entitlement to oppress. When we turn our heart to the source, then there is only humility and gratitude, peacefulness and thankfulness and piety that comes with that. Because we know that we are not the source of it.

So the message, as I said, was simple. Allah says, **“To him ascend the good words and good deeds. When you act with goodness, act with goodness in your heart. When you speak, speak with goodness in your heart.”** The Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, **“The good deed wipes out the wrong deed.”** These are all tremendous powers given to us; therefore, we need to turn to reality and take heed, not be like those who Allah says, **“Do they not see that they are tried once or twice every year? Yet they do not turn to reality, nor do they take heed.”** Inshallah, we learn the lesson. So contemplate the power you have over one another today. (*Du’ās*).

SECOND KHUTBA H *Du’ās*.