

Whoever Resembles a People is One of Them

﴿ من تشبه بقوم فهو منهم ﴾

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The Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said,

"Whoever resembles a people is one of them." (Recorded by Abu Dawud)

This is a very important principle in the Shariah. The famous scholar Ibn Taymiyyah once wrote that it is part of the goal of the shariah to distinguish those people who follow the straight path from all other people.

A look at the Qur'aan and the hadith of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) will show us that we Muslims are not supposed to imitate or be blind followers of any other peoples. We have our own unique guidance and this is what we must turn to.

There are different hadith that clearly state that we are supposed to be different from the Jews, Christians, Romans, Persians, Magians, polytheists, people of jaahiliyyah, bedouins who had not embraced Islaam completely and so forth.

After hearing this long list of groups one will realise the following: We Muslims are a unique people. We take our way of life, our values and our customs only from Allaah's guidance - the Qur'aan and the Sunnah - and the way of the believers. We don't care what other people may follow. In fact, in our hearts, we have no desire whatsoever to follow them or to be like them. We want to be like the true believers and only the true believers.

In fact, we pray for this in every rakah of every prayer we perform. In every prayer, we state,

"Guide us to the straight path - the path of those whom You have blessed."

Unfortunately, many people make that du'aa and they do not realise who are those people whose path we are asking Allaah to guide us to. By our actions, sometimes, we make it very clear that we are not sincere to that du'aa that we make at least seventeen times a day! When we make that du'aa we must realise that we are asking Allaah to guide us to the path of certain people - those who have earned Allaah's pleasure and grace. They are the ones whom Allaah has described elsewhere in the Qur'aan,

"And whoso obeys Allaah and the Messenger, then they will be in the company of those on whom Allaah has bestowed Grace of the Prophets, the sincere, the martyrs and the righteous. And how excellent these companions are." (an-Nisaa, 69)

These are the people whose path we face Allaah seventeen times a day and beseech Him to guide us to. It is very sad that today many Muslims are striving and working hard to follow the footsteps of the opposite people - the people that they ask Allaah against following. We also say in al- Faatiha,

"Not the path of those who have earned Your wrath nor of those who have gone astray." (al-Faatihah, 7)

These people whose path we are seeking to avoid are none other than the Jews and Christians, in particular, as the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) explained.

In this country [USA], many people are calling for us to follow in the footsteps of the Jews. They think that we are a minority like them and they have done very well for themselves. It is amazing that we are calling upon each other to follow in the footsteps of those who have earned Allaah's wrath. Don't you realise that they gained their place in this society by means that are completely unacceptable in Islaam? Do you want us to behave like them and you think that Allaah will be pleased with us if we behave like them? Don't you see that by their means they have actually given up a great deal of their faith and done many things that go against their own teachings?

There is an expression in the United States that states, "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery". The fact is that an individual would not imitate and follow another unless he has some respect or love for what that other person is and what he is doing. Or, perhaps, he has the desire to be one of them and he does not want to be an outsider as he may not have enough iman and courage to show himself for what he should be: a Muslim, believing in and submitting to God.

When this desire to imitate and follow the ways of the disbelievers happens to a Muslim, it is a very sad thing. It is a sign that there is some weakness or defect in his iman and in his heart - otherwise he would never desire or aspire to be like those who displease Allaah and are destined to the Hellfire.

Following the ways of the disbelievers - as opposed to the ways of the believers - and trying to come close to them is actually one of the characteristics of the hypocrites. Allaah says,

"Give to the hypocrites the tidings that there is for them a painful torment. Those who take disbelievers for protectors and helpers instead of believers. Do they seek honour with them? Verily, all honour is with Allaah (alone)" (an-Nisaa, 138-139)

This is exactly what many of those who imitate them are doing. One of the main reasons why one imitates and appears like the disbelievers is that he wants to be accepted, liked or respected by them. He does not want to be looked down upon by them as an outsider or as one from a different religion and way of life. But Allaah says,

"Verily all honour is with Allaah (alone)" (an-Nisaa, 139)

The only one that a believer should try to please is Allaah - and this is achieved not by trying to be like the disbelievers but it comes about by following the Qur'aan and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam). In reality, the acceptance and approval of the disbelievers should really, in essence, mean nothing in the eyes of a true believer. In the sight of Allaah, they have no value or honour. Allaah states in the Qur'aan:

"Honour belongs only to Allaah, His Messenger and the believers" (al-Munaafiqoon, 8)

A hadith of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) demonstrates that they are worth nothing in the sight of Allaah. That is why Allaah gives them of this world and in the Hereafter they will be nothing but fuel for the Hellfire.

This fuel of the Hellfire are the ones that many Muslims are imitating today, chasing after their customs and fads, trying to please them and win their approval. A Muslim must realise clearly in his mind that all of these disbelievers are either worshipping false gods, other humans or their egos and desires. These are the people who some Muslims are following, imitating and bending over backwards to please. Allaah has said in the Qur'aan:

"Thus We have made you a just and balanced nation, that you may be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger be witness against you." (al-Baqarah, 143)

We are supposed to be witnesses against mankind. We are supposed to be witnesses to the truth of Islaam and its superiority over every other way of life. We should be showing people that we are the true followers of Allaah's guidance and that what we have is the best guidance for mankind. If this is truly in our hearts, we would not turn to the ways of the disbelievers and imitate them.

How can we be witnesses of Islaam against humanity when, instead of showing that we believe in Islaam and love it and demonstrate its greatness, we give up our ways and customs of Islaam to follow the ways of the disbelievers? I cannot tell you how many times I have been asked by non-Muslims, "If your religion is the truth and so wonderful, why are so many Muslims abandoning your teachings and following the ways of the West in their own countries?" What answer can be given to that question?

We see this phenomena of Muslims imitating the ways of non-Muslims in many ways. The following are all examples of this phenomena: Muslim men shaving their beards to be like their clean-shave Western colleagues that they respect so dearly. Muslim men giving up the modest attire that was found in every Muslim country for the tightest pants and latest fashions of the West. Muslim women giving up the Islaamic hijab and come out in public dressing in the latest Western fashions.

In some parts of the Muslim world, even the definition of beauty and cleanliness is defined according to the disbelievers and not according to the Qur'aan and Sunnah. Some

Muslims today believe that having a beard is unclean. They think that to be clean shave implies being clean, civilised, and proper. Is this what the Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) has taught us about the beard? Is this how the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and his Companions viewed the beard?

All of these can be seen throughout the Muslim world. What does all of this show? It shows that we have lost the true dignity and honour of being believers. We no longer feel honour, dignity and joy in following the ways of the Prophets, martyrs, sincere and righteous. Instead, we feel better when we succumb to or follow the ways of those who have earned Allaah's wrath or have gone astray. Allaah say in the Qur'aan:

"Our Lord! Make us not a trial for the disbelievers, and forgive us. Our Lord, verily, You, only You, are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." (al-Mumtahanah, 5)

One of the explanations given to this verse is that when the believers do not set an example for the non-believers, when the believers themselves are not following or adhering to the teachings of Islaam, then this is a great trial for the disbelievers. How could they possibly be attracted to Islaam if they not only do not see Islaam as being practised in front of them but they actually see the Muslims abandoning their revelation from Allaah to follow the ways and customs of the disbelievers. This will definitely lead the disbeliever to conclude that Islaam has nothing to offer and it could not possibly contain the truth that will lead to his salvation.

Let us all return to the ways and guidance of the Qur'aan and Sunnah. Let us all feel the honour and dignity that true iman should give us - we should feel that this is a special bounty that Allaah has given to us. We should turn to the Qur'aan and the Sunnah of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) to take our values, our customs, our beliefs, our aspirations, and our guidance from those two sources. That is the only way of life that is worth living and that is the only way of life that is pleasing to Allaah. If we abandon it and instead follow the ways of the disbelievers we would be abandoning a great thing for something that will actually bring us nothing.