



**Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura**

**Friday Sermon**

**20 May 2016 / 13 Syaaban 1437H**

**Interactions with Fellow Muslims**

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الْغَنِيِّ الْحَمِيدِ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولَهُ الْمَبْعُوثُ بِالرَّحْمَةِ وَالْقَوْلِ السَّدِيدِ، اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلِّمْ وَسَلِّمْ تَسْلِيمًا كَثِيرًا. أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ.

Blessed Friday jemaah,

Let us increase our takwa to Allah and strengthen our relationship with Allah, by obeying all of His commands and abstaining from what He has prohibited upon us. May we receive His guidance to survive this life that is full of challenges and tests.

Jemaah,

We are now in the month of Syaaban, a month where we should be planning how we would welcome and spend our time in the blessed month of Ramadan. We will be facing many new experiences this Ramadan. For example, the sweet experience

of living with Allah in the calm nights of Ramadan, and enlivening these nights with our fellow Muslims as we perform tarawih prayers shoulder to shoulder and recite the Quran together. I am sure many of us are excited and cannot wait to welcome Ramadan as we often make this supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ لَنَا فِي شَهْرِ شَعْبَانَ، وَبَلِّغْنَا رَمَضَانَ

Which means: *“Oh Allah, bless us in the month of Syaaban and bring us to meet Ramadan”*.

Blessed Friday Jemaah,

Among the beautiful experiences that await us this Ramadan is how closely related the relationship of a servant with his Lord (حبل من الله) and his relationship with fellow humankind (حبل من الناس) are. These cannot be separated and must come hand-in-hand.

Thus, we must realise that as a person gets closer to Allah, he will also bring himself closer to others. And the opposite also holds true - the more we strengthen our relationship with others, we are also bringing ourselves closer to Allah.

Jemaah,

Scholars of the past have left behind a very valuable treasure of knowledge. It encompasses various opinions, analysis, legal

postulates, principles, summaries, examples and more. Through this rich heritage, we can see that they were diligent and worked really hard in their ijihad to offer solutions to complex issues and challenges that faced the community during their time, while taking into consideration the environment and conditions then.

Through this legacy, it is also evident that there was a high level of intellectuality, civility and maturity in exchanging ideas, that spurred the spirit of debate, brainstorming and enrichment of ideas without abandoning the principles of kinship and friendship whether it was physical or spiritual.

It cannot be denied that scholars of the past also had differences of opinions and spirited debates on issues related to the usul (core issues) or furu' (secondary issues) of religion. However, if we study them, these differences were few and in fact, was overcome with prudence and wisdom.

In facing differences of opinions among Muslims (intra-faith), what is required is a high level of maturity and not strong displays of emotions; mutual love and not hatred. Scholars are very mindful of this and hold firmly to the following principle:

الْعِلْمُ رَحْمٌ بَيْنَ أَهْلِهِ

This principle can be interpreted as: *“Knowledge connects those with knowledge”*. It can also be interpreted to mean *“Knowledge is displaying grace among those who have acquired knowledge”*.

Let us continue to spend the rest of Syaaban by reflecting upon how we have interacted with other Muslims, including on social media. In preparing for the coming blessed month of Ramadan, we should watch our words and actions, and ensure that we do not contribute to disputes and divisions among Muslims.

We are able to live together harmoniously despite the different orientations or opinions that we have. We can remain united despite the different mazhabs among us. Did Allah not say in Surah Al-Anbiya verse 92:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ  
فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٩٢﴾

Which means: *“Indeed this, your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me.”*

Blessed Friday jemaah,

One of the contemporary scholars who has been actively promoting unity and cohesion among the ummah is Syeikh Abdullah Bin Bayyah. In his writing on *Adab al-Ikhtilaf* (Manners

in Discussing Differences), he outlined several important values that must be upheld to avoid disputes among the ummah. These values include the following:

**First:** A person has to be gentle and graceful when interacting with others in situations where there are differences of opinion.

**Second:** A person has to attain the intellectual level that is necessary to adequately address the issue being discussed.

**Third:** A person should not deny or denounce an opinion which is within the realm of ijtiḥād. **Fourth:** A person has to give due respect to scholars who undertake the process of ijtiḥād.

We can draw from the explanations above the spirit and objectives that we should be guided by in our efforts to revive *Adab al-Ikhtilaf*.

It is an extremely admirable effort for the asatizah, who are looked upon as religious leaders, to be at the forefront of this effort especially within the space of social media and academic discussions. It is also noble if scholars do not bring the general public into these debates – whether in giving comments or by sharing information that have not been authenticated. This is based on what Allah says in the Quran in Surah Ali-Imran, verse 103:

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

Which means: *“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.”*

And Allah also says in Surah Al-Anfal, verse 46:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَيُخْذَ بِرِجْلِكُمْ وَأَصْبِرُوا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

Which means: *“And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient*

Blessed Friday jemaah,

While we discuss and remind ourselves of these messages from Allah on the importance of strengthening relationships between fellow humans - both Muslims and non-Muslims - this does not mean that our Singapore Muslim community does not understand the importance of this issue nor are we implying that we have not applied it in our daily lives. However, these are continuous reminders to us all. Our beloved Rasulullah s.a.w. said, which means: *“The religion is a naseehah (sincere advice).”* The Companions asked him, *“To whom?”* The Prophet s.a.w. said, *“To Allah, His Book, His Messenger, to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk.”* [Hadith reported by Imam Muslim]

May we be placed among those who always receive reminders and guidance from Allah. Amin Ya Rabal Alamin.

بَارَكَ اللهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ  
الآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ  
الْعَلِيمُ، أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَائِرِ  
الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ فَيَا  
فَوْزَ الْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ وَيَا نَجَاةَ التَّائِبِينَ.