



Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura

Friday Sermon

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**Managing Differences Of Opinion (Fiqh Ikhtilaf)**

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى إِحْسَانِهِ، وَالشُّكْرُ لَهُ عَلَى تَوْفِيقِهِ وَامْتِنَانِهِ، وَأَشْهَدُ  
أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ تَعْظِيمًا لِسَانِهِ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ  
سَيِّدَنَا وَنَبِيَّنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدَهُ وَرَسُولَهُ الدَّاعِيَ إِلَى رِضْوَانِهِ، اللَّهُمَّ  
صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ  
وَإِخْوَانِهِ.

أَمَّا بَعْدُ، يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُسْلِمُونَ، أُوصِيكُمْ وَنَفْسِي بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ  
وَجَلَّ، فَهِيَ وَصِيَّةُ اللَّهِ لِلأَوَّلِينَ وَالآخِرِينَ.

Blessed Friday Jemaah,

Let us come together and increase our takwa to Allah s.w.t. Let us help each other in obeying Allah's commands and abstaining from His prohibitions, to the best of our abilities. Hopefully, by doing so, Allah will gather all of us together in paradise in the hereafter. Amin Ya Rabbal 'Alamin.

Beloved Jemaah,

Allah s.w.t. says in Surah Hud verses 118-119:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ  
مُخْتَلِفِينَ ۗ إِلَّا مَن رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ ۗ وَلِذَلِكَ  
خَلَقَهُمْ ۗ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لِأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِّنَ  
الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

Which means: *“And if your Lord had willed, He could have made humankind one community; but they will not cease to differ. Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He created them. But the word of your Lord is to be fulfilled that, “I will surely fill Hell with jinn and men all together.”*

These verses remind us that as Allah’s creations that are blessed with intellect, humankind will definitely have differences of opinion. It is the way we are created, or rather the sunnatullah of creations. Discussions and an exchange of opinions will lead to ideas and thus, bring about benefits to us; whether in areas pertaining to the economy, social, intellectual and religion.

The sunnah of differences of opinions can be seen from the example of the companions of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. Let

me now share a story about two companions (sahabah) of Rasulullah s.a.w. who had different opinions regarding a religious matter. It was narrated in the book *“Adabul ikhtilaf”*, that there were differences of opinion between Ibnu ‘Abbas and Zaid bin Tsabit on the issue of inheritance. Ibnu ‘Abbas was confident that Zaid bin Tsabit’s opinion was wrong and wanted to debate with him openly by the Kaabah.

However, it was reported in the book of *Hayatus Sahabah* that at one time, Saidina Ibnu ‘Abbas saw Saidina Zaid mounted on his ride. He then took away the rope that Zaid used for his ride, and wanted to pull it himself. Zaid said to him: *“Let go of the rope o cousin of Rasulullah!”* Ibnu ‘Abbas replied: *“This is how we have been instructed to treat (honour) our scholars.”* Saidina Zaid bin Tsabit then said: *“Give me your hand!”* Ibnu ‘Abbas gave his hand and Zaid kissed his hand, and said: *“This is how we have been instructed to honour the family of the Prophet.”* In fact, Imam Baihaqi narrated that when Saidina Zaid passed away, Saidina Ibn ‘Abbas said: *“O you people! Whoever wishes to know how knowledge leaves us should know that it is like this that knowledge leaves. A great deal of knowledge has just left us today.”*

Subhanallah, that was the adab of the companions as taught and trained by Nabi s.a.w. Despite their differences of opinion, they never allowed it to affect their friendship and the love they had for one another. They may have different views on

scholarly matters, but they did not allow syaitan to influence them to the point that there was animosity between them.

Jemaah,

There have been differences of opinion between Muslims since the early days. Lately, with various social media platforms, the diversity of opinions seems to be more obvious among Muslims, especially Muslims in Singapore. In fact, at times we seem to focus more on the differences rather than the similarities that can bring us together and help maintain the bonds of unity among us as Muslims. We keep focusing on the different views and perspectives. We forget that at the end of the day, we all worship the One God and believe in the same Prophet; pray in the same direction and refer to the same Quran. And we all hold on to the same pillars of Islam and Iman.

As I mentioned earlier, having different views has its pros and cons. It is an advantage because it leads to many good and unique ideas. But it is a disadvantage when it causes hostility and animosity among people, to the point that it brings about hatred, insults and comments that belittle our own Muslim brothers and sisters. Such differences are not included in the sunnah of our Prophet s.a.w.

Thus, when we want to discuss with those who hold a different opinion compared to that of ours, we should bear in mind these considerations:

**First: Whenever we aim to engage in a discussion or debate, ensure that we have the right intentions.**

Scholars taught us that when we have academic or intellectual debates, it must be done with the intention of achieving the truth, and not to fan our ego or with the aim of defeating another person.

It was recorded in the book *“Adab As-Shafi’i wa Manaqibuhu”*, that Imam As-Shafi’i said: *“I do not debate with a person because I hope that he is wrong”*.

This is the attitude maintained by our Muslim scholars. It does not mean that we cannot have our own opinions before we embark on a discussion. Instead, we are asked to be open-minded and to seek from Allah that hopefully through the discussion, we can learn the weakness of our arguments and be closer to the truth.

**Second: When we want to debate, choose the right platform, place and time.**

There were times when the Sahabah decided not to discuss a matter that is khilaf (have differences of opinion) if they feel that the discussion will only bring about more negative effects

compared to positive effects. For example, it was narrated by ibn Mas'ud r.a., that when Saidina Abdullah ibn Mas'ud r.a. was performing hajj, he did not shorten (*Qasar*) his Zuhur prayers while he prayed in jemaah with Saidina Uthman r.a. (who led the prayer as Imam).

When asked why he prayed four rakaat of Zuhur when he did not do so with Rasulullah, Abu Bakar and Umar r.a., he replied: *"Differences is a form of evil"*. It is not that Saidina Abdullah did not want to discuss the matter, but it can be understood that he said as such because they were performing their haj and one of the objectives of haj is to unite Muslims. Thus, it is better that they focus on completing their worship rather than discussing the matter as it may bring about enmity and doubts. That is the wisdom of the Companions that we should emulate.

If the differences could not be avoided and they each held on to their own opinions, they would still make the effort to understand the views of others. At the same time, they would openly admit any mistakes without any embarrassment.

The companions and scholars (ulama) also held people of knowledge in high regard, and never saw themselves as being better than others and never put anyone down.

Those who are often debating and arguing with others on social media platforms such as *Facebook*, meet your brothers and

sisters, pray together and discuss the matter using kind and courteous words. Do not let syaitan influence us to hurl unkind and rude words from behind our computer screens to the extent that we will not be able to give salam and make doa for the wellness of others when we meet them face to face; for this is not the way of our scholars.

Remember the doa that Allah taught us in Surah Al-hasyr verse 10:

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا  
بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا  
رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

Which means: *“Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts [any] resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed You are Kind and Merciful.”*

May Allah help us in maintaining the unity among Muslims. May Allah preserve our bonds of ukhuwwah and protect our hearts from envy and jealousy, and may we all attain Allah’s love in this world and the hereafter. Amin ya Rabbal ‘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.