

AS-SABIQUN

"The vanguard of Islam—the first of those who forsook their homes, and of those who gave them aid, and also those who follow them in all good deeds—well-pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him: For them hath He prepared Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever: that is the supreme Felicity." (al Tawbah, 9:100)

Masjid Al-Islam's Newsletter of Islamic Movement

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The Meaning of AS-SĀBIQŪN AL-AWWALŪN

The root of *as-Sābiqūn* in Arabic is S-B-Q. **Sabaqa:** (vb.) to precede, to go before, to be prior, to outstrip; also, the sense of "already" or before; (n.vb.) the act of outstripping, of going before, outstrip, outrace, i.e. "Then press forward as in a race.." (al Nāzi'āt, 79:4), to pass. **Sabaqa:** (vb.) to race. **Sabiq:** to act.

In this issue, we will, *insha'Allāh*, provide information and insight into the word *as-Sābiqūn*. We gave our newsletter this title because the word *as-Sābiqūn*, more than any other word, embodies what we strive to be. It contains within it a history of struggle and victory, of sacrifice and triumph, and it calls to the deepest, most Muslim part of us to give ourselves wholly over to Allah, His Prophet, His *Ummah* and His movement. What follows is some *tafseer* (commentary) on this word as it is found in the Qur'ān. The *tafseer* provides us with definition and historical context, both of which are necessary if we are to appreciate what *as-Sābiqūn* personifies.

The vanguard (as-Sābiqūn) of Islam—the first of those who forsook their homes, and of those who

gave them aid, and also those who follow them in all good deeds—well-pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him: For them hath He prepared Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever: that is the supreme Felicity."
(al Tawbah, 9:100)

*Tafseer/Commentary*¹:

The vanguard of Islam—those in the first rank—are those who dare and suffer for the Cause and never flinch. The first historical examples are the *Muhājirs* and the *Ansār*. The *Muhājirs*—those who forsook their homes in Makkah and migrated to Madīnah, the Holy Prophet being among the last to leave the post of danger, are mentioned first. Then come the *Ansār*, the Helpers, and the citizens of Madīnah who invited them, welcomed them, and gave them aid, and who formed the pivot of good deeds of the new Community. Then are mentioned all who follow them in good deeds: not only the early heroes and ordinary men and women who had been Companions of the

Prophet or had seen him, but men and women in all ages who have lived noble lives. In spite of all their sacrifices and suffering they rejoice in the precious gift of the Good Pleasure of Allah, and their Salvation in the Supreme Felicity which such Good Pleasure gives, symbolized by the Gardens of Heaven.

The *Sābiqūn* took the lead in responding to the call of the Truth and in embracing Islam; they did not wait to see whether others also would embrace this religion or not. After accepting faith, they were in the vanguard of those who tried to fulfill its demands and to offer sacrifices in times of difficulty. They did not hesitate to stake their lives to elevate Allah's *kalimah* and to support and help His Messenger. These are the people who were ever-fresh flowers in the garden of this *Ummah* (as well as the Gardens of Paradise), and who adorned the front rank of the followers of Islam.

As-Sābiqūn al-Awwalūn (the first and foremost vanguards) belong to the period prior to the Battle of Badr because this period was full of great stresses and hardships. The Battle of Badr had actually given the decision in favor of Islam, after which the obstructions to embrace it were disappearing gradually.

The phrase "...and also those who followed them in goodness..." refers to those people who followed the earlier leaders in joining the caravan of Islam and who followed their lead diligently, **as well as others who followed their example sincerely, regardless of their having been born in another place or in another country or at another time, for all tread the same path and are members of the same *Ummah*.**

In the phrase "...well-pleased is Allah with them, as they are with Him," Allah has declared in His Book the fact of His being pleased with the group of Believers described above. This group would naturally evoke great respect and admiration in

the hearts of the general Muslims, and all sincere Muslims would definitely try to emulate their examples.

QUR'ĀNIC REFERENCES

The Qur'ān refers to these souls, "the **Foremost**," who strive toward Allah and work in His way, hastening in every good work, several times. What follows are some of these Qur'ānic references:

"Then We have given the Book for inheritance to such of Our servants as We have chosen: But there are among them some who wrong their own souls; some who follow a middle course; and some who are, by Allah's leave, Foremost (Sābiq) in good deeds; that is the highest Grace."
(*Fātir*, 35:32)

"And those Foremost (was-Sābiqūn) in Faith will be Foremost (as-Sābiqūn) in the Hereafter. These will be those Nearest (al-Muqarrabūn) to Allah: in Gardens of Bliss." (*al Wāqī'ah*, 56:10-12)

"Be ye foremost (sābiqū) in seeking forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden of Bliss, the width whereof is as the width of heaven and earth, prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers: that is the Grace of Allah, which He bestows on whom He pleases: and Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding."
(*al Hadīd*, 57:21)

"To each is a goal to which Allah turns him; then strive together (fastabiqu) as in a race towards all that is good. Wheresoever ye are, Allah will bring you together. For Allah hath power over all things." (*al Baqarah*, 2:148)

"To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath

come to thee. To each among you have we prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single People, but His plan is to test you in what he hath given you; so strive as in a race (fastabiqu) in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the Truth of the matter in which ye dispute." (al Mā'idah, 5:48)

Tafseer/Commentary:

The custodians of the Qur'ān after the Holy Prophet were the People of Islam. They were chosen for the Book, not in any narrow sense, but in the sense that the Book was given for their age and they were charged to obey it and preserve and propagate it, so that all mankind should receive the Message. But it does not follow that they are all true and faithful to their charge, as indeed we see too painfully around us today. Just as mankind was chosen collectively to be Vicegerents for Allah, and yet some among mankind have fallen into evil—even so, some in the house of Islam fail to follow the Light given to them, and thus they “wrong their own souls.” But some follow a middle course; in their case “the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak”: their intentions are good, but they have much to learn yet of the true Muslim life and Muslim virtues. Then there is a third class: they may not indeed be perfect, but both their intentions and their conduct are sound, and they form an example to other men: they are “foremost” in every good deed.

It is important to make clear that these people who are the “Foremost” attain their position within the *Ummah* not by their own merit, but by the Grace of Allah. And they have achieved the highest Achievement—THE SALVATION.

AS-SĀBIQŪN - WHERE ARE WE TODAY?

Today there is a desperate need for the Muslims to incorporate the above *ayāt* in our lives. We see the need for a revival in the Muslim and non-Muslim world of those believers who would be pleasing to Allah as they are themselves pleased with Him. To strive to be among those people who are classified as the Foremost or in the vanguard of Islam, we must develop and maintain certain characteristics.

As in times past, the Foremost must be able to recognize **what truth is, and who is telling the truth**. They are those who, by virtue of their insight, strong belief, and nearness to Allah, are compelled to take a stand and adopt an attitude in line with the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. Like their predecessors, they stand for truth and justice and are willing to sacrifice their time, property, and lives in the way of Allah.

These pristine believers also understand the true nature of the Islamic movement. They understand, firstly, that Allah is God and Muhammad is His last Messenger. Secondly, they understand that no other system was or is equal to Allah's guidance. Therefore, they automatically follow the lead of Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) without questions or hesitation. They are unified; they support and help each other rather than attacking each other. They resist assimilation or integration with man-made concepts because they are aware that no matter how “small” the compromise, it inevitably leads away from Allah (*swt*). Finally, they maintain a positive attitude even during the worst of times, understanding that the final victory is with Allah and Allah alone.

Our need today as Muslims is to revive that positive spirit and belief that would give us confidence in Allah (*swt*), in our Book, the Qur'ān, and in our Messenger, Muhammad (*saw*). With this spirit, we can establish Islam here in the West, where we have an opportunity to show, in

the heart of *Kufrstan* ("the Land of Unbelief"), that the God-based system is superior to man-made systems, even those with "constitutions." We must refuse to be seduced by the supposed "progress" and "wealth" of these anti-Allah systems. This attitude is necessary to implement Islam in a true and full sense. This brings us to the last characteristic to be mentioned about the group of people on whom this issue was focused.

Those who constitute *as-Sābiqūn al-Awwalūn*, the Foremost, develop and execute plans to bring about an Islamic system. This goal is consistent with achieving success for the Muslims. They are unwilling to wait for the much larger and better-financed groups to shake off their lethargy and provide leadership. Instead, the *Sābiqūn* move on their own—propelled by Allah—and wait for others to catch up. Because they understand the full meaning of '*Allāhu Akbar*', they are not intimidated by resources held at the disposal of others, such as money, people, titles, etc. These are the people mentioned in the above noted *ayāt* as well as many others not noted here.

¹ *Tafseer* in this issue derived from 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali's well-known translation work *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'ān*.

ACTIVITIES AT MASJID AL-ISLAM

Salātul Jumu'ah.....Fridays @ 12:30 pm
Family Night.....first Saturday of every month

REGULAR CLASS SCHEDULE

Ta'lim..... Sundays after *Salātul Zuhr*
Islamic StudiesMondays @ 7:00 pm
Brotherhood/Leadership Class.....Tuesdays @ 7:00 pm
Prayer/Basics of Islam Class....Wednesdays @ 7:00 pm
Sisterhood (An-Nisā') Class..... Saturdays @ 11:00 am

THINGS TO DO NOW!

1. Spend at least thirty minutes a day reading the Book of Allah (the Qur'ān). The early morning, before or after *Salātul-Fajr*, is the best time for framing the Word of Allah.
2. Not only learn to read and recite the Qur'ān and *Hadīth*, but ponder and reflect over its deeper meanings. Also study the life of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and the history of Islam and Muslims.
3. Be very conscious about physical fitness and exercise. Diet, and abstain completely from alcohol, drugs, and smoking.
4. Be neat, clean, and well-groomed, for Islam was founded on cleanliness.
5. Always be truthful, and never tell lies.
6. Fulfill your promises and agreements. Never breach a contract, regardless of circumstances.
7. Be courageous and enduring. The highest degree of courage is telling the truth in your own disfavor, keeping secrets, admitting mistakes, and controlling yourself when angry.
8. Always be serious and dignified; however, this should not prevent you from smiling or engaging in truthful jesting.
9. Always be equitable and of sound judgement in all situations. Never allow your anger to make you forget merits, nor let affection and pleasure blind you to defects. Don't allow disputes to make you ungrateful. Always speak the truth, no matter how painful it is, even if it is against yourself or against the people dearest to you.

10. Be active, energetic, and skilled in public services. You should feel happy when you offer a service to another person. You should feel compelled to visit the sick, assist the needy, support the weak, and give relief to the ill-fated, even if it is only a kind word of sympathy. Always rush to do good deeds.
11. Be compassionate, graciously excusing and forgiving others. Be tender, forbearing, and clement to people and animals and observe good manners with everyone. Observe Islamic social injunctions. Be merciful to the young and respectful to the old. Make room for your brother and sister in meetings and gatherings. Don't be noisy. Always seek permission before entering non-public places and make a courteous exit.
12. Be proficient in reading and writing. Establish a private library, no matter how small. Become familiar with the general Islamic subjects to such a degree that you are capable of forming judgements concerning day to day problems.
13. Undertake some economic enterprise. Try to establish a private business regardless of how small it might be.
14. Perform your job in the best manner you can and stay away from dishonesty and cheating. Observe your appointments and be on time.
15. Foster Islamic wealth in general by encouraging and helping Islamic economic institutions. Be careful about your money; don't let it fall into un-Islamic hands regardless of the circumstances. Eat and wear products of Islamic enterprises.
16. Contribute a portion of your wealth to the Islamic community. Pay *Zakāt*, no matter how small your income; only Allah knows what the future will bring.
17. Save a portion of your income; only Allah knows what the future will bring.
18. Strive to make your daily life Islamic in every aspect—legal, educational, economic, in your greetings and language, etc.
19. Perfect your prayers and strive to perform them within their proper time periods. Also try to pray in congregation in the masjid as often as possible.
20. Strive hard against your own soul until it is under your full control. Lower your gaze, control your emotions, and direct your sexual urge to decent and legal outlets.
21. Always cherish the intention of *jihād* and the desire for martyrdom in the way of Allah and actually prepare yourself for that.
22. Spend some time every night before going to bed on self-criticism, reflecting upon the good or bad things you have done throughout the day.
23. Avoid unnecessary luxury and all aspects of softness and laxity.
24. Know all your brothers and sisters. Love them, respect them, and help them in any way possible. Be at all meeting and seminars, being absent only when absolutely necessary.
25. Call others to Islam. Familiarize your leadership with your activities, and never undertake any action without first consulting your leadership. Keep yourself in constant spiritual and physical contact with your community and always consider yourself a soldier in the barracks awaiting a command.

