

FRIDAY SERMON

19th August 2022

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We will continue reading from the 3rd volume of Malfuzaat in English of Hazrat Masih Maood (as). In the extracts that we are reading, he is speaking about prayer. He said:

“It is from the rib that Eve was created. I believe in the power of Allah Almighty. Now if someone were to assert that if this were the case, we would have no rib, I would respond by saying that this is a false analogy. Do not judge Allah the Exalted by your own standards. If I did not consider God Almighty to be Powerful and Magnificent, I would not be able to witness these examples of the acceptance of my prayers. One may observe whose power was at work in the case that was presented before Captain Douglas. Doctor Clark, a man that commanded influence on account of his religion, was involved and he was joined by the lawyer Ram Bajhat, from the Aryas; then Maulvi Muhammad Hussain, a staunch enemy was presented as a witness against me. With all of this, there was the statement of Abdul Hameed himself, in which he alleged that I had sent him to commit the murder in question. This statement was submitted in Amritsar and he repeated this statement before the Deputy Commissioner as well. Now, who moved the heart of Captain Douglas to doubt the statement made by Abdul Hameed and hand him over to the police again to ascertain the actual truth of the matter? In short, everything that transpired during the course of this case clearly demonstrated the power and control of Allah the Exalted. The reason I have mentioned this case is only to explain that it is utterly foolish and in fact a sin to measure Allah the Exalted by the same yardstick that one would use to measure a lowly human, no matter who that person may be.

Therefore, to suggest that if the rib of Adam, peace be upon him, was taken out and then Eve was fashioned from that rib, then how do human beings at present have ribs, is a very ignorant thing to say and is an affront to Allah Almighty. Bear in mind that European philosophy is full of misguidance and leads a person to ruin. In the same manner, to claim that there was no era in time in which humans were created from clay is wrong. I do not believe in the eternity of species at all.

I do believe, however, that Allah the Exalted has never ceased being the Creator; the world has withered away into non-existence many times and then been recreated anew; this is nothing unusual. When death occurs in individual cases, why should it not be a possibility that the whole of existence will taste of death? Even the Hindus and Greeks believe in the Great Reckoning. Those who consider Allah the Exalted to be a Being of finite powers may be described as follows:

مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ

They do not make a just estimate of Allah. (HQ22:75)

Such people believe in God only in a limited sense. This is also a branch of naturalism. The Holy Quran clearly tells us:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ

Surely, thy Lord does bring about what He pleases.

Then, the Holy Quran states:

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

Verily His command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, 'Be!,' and it is.

It is this very omnipotence of Allah the Exalted, and His extraordinarily supreme powers which have instilled a passion in my heart for prayer.

The Philosophy of the Acceptance of Prayer

Prayer is a magnificent thing! Alas, people fail to understand it. Some people believe that every prayer, irrespective of the manner and state in which it is made, ought to be accepted in every case. For this reason, when certain people pray but do not see their supplication fulfilled in the manner that they have assumed in their own minds, they become disheartened and lose hope, and as a result they begin to think ill of God Almighty. The greatness of a believer lies in his not losing hope even though apparently, he may not have achieved the objective of his prayer. For divine mercy considers that prayer to be contrary to their best interest. You may observe that if a child attempts to grasp a piece of flaming coal, the mother will run towards the child

and stop it from doing so. In fact, if a mother slapped her child on account of such foolish behaviour, this would not be surprising either. In the same manner, I feel pleasure and delight when I reflect on this philosophy of prayer and observe that the All-Knowing, All-Aware God knows which prayer is suited to our best interest.

The Etiquette of Prayer

I am so disappointed time and again when people send letters for prayer and also write in those requests that if such and such prayer is not accepted in their favour, they will consider me to be false. Alas! How uninformed these people are of the etiquette of prayer. Such people are unaware of the requirements that fall upon one who prays and the one who makes a request for prayer. Such people fall prey to ill thinking even before the prayer is made and act as if they do a favour upon me by accepting me and threaten to reject and deny me. I am able to perceive the stench of such letters and I believe that it would have been better if such people had not written a request for prayer at all. I have spoken on this issue many a time and briefly advise that Allah the Exalted desires to maintain with His servants a relationship of friends. The relationship between two friends is one of give and take. A similar relationship exists between Allah the Exalted and His servant.

What is a relationship of give and take in the estimation of Allah Almighty? God fulfills and accepts the many thousands of prayers made by His servant, covers his flaws, and showers divine grace and mercy upon him, despite his being a most lowly and worthless creature. In the same manner, God also deserves, by way of right, that His servant accepts His will as well. In other words, if a servant is unsuccessful in attaining the objective that he seeks in a certain prayer, as per his own will, he should not think ill of God. On the contrary, such a one ought to ascribe their failure to some mistake of their own and accept the will of Allah Almighty with open-heartedness, believing that this is what their Lord desires.

The Trials of Believers

This is the very concept to which Allah the Exalted alludes in the following verse:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ
*And We will try you with something of fear and hunger,
and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits.*

The word fear (*khawf*) in this context refers to an empty fear and implies that the final outcome is destined to be a positive one. This alone becomes an atonement for one's sins. Then, the word hunger (*al-ju*) refers to straitened circumstances such as hunger or poverty. Sometimes when a person's shirt becomes torn, he does not have the ability to buy a new one. The Arabic word *ju* has been used here and not thirst (*atah*) because the definition of the latter is encompassed in the former word. Then, there is the loss of one's wealth (*naqsim-minal-amwal*) when, for example, a thief robs everything that a person owns and does not even leave enough for the victim to eat in the morning. Just reflect! How painful and agonizing are such misfortunes. Then, there is the loss of life. Some people are forced to bear the death of their children, one after another, until not even a single child remains. In this verse, a loss of life implies that the individual being tried remains alive, but their dear ones and relatives die. In times like these, a person is faced with great tragedy. There are a large number of friends with whom I hold such a close relationship that they themselves and their families are, as if, my own. When any of these dear ones depart this world, I feel as much grief as one who loses their most beloved child. The term fruits (*thamarat*) include a person's children as well and also the final success that one expects after his efforts. When such efforts are wasted, this causes a sense of deep anguish as well. It has been observed countless times that when a person sitting an exam fails, they will be driven to take their own lives. The condition of Ayub Baig also worsened after he failed in his examination. Previously, he was very healthy and well. Therefore, Allah the Exalted gives glad tidings to those who are faced with such tribulations and states:

وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

But give glad tidings to the patient.

That is to say, in such circumstances, when a person bears these hardships with fortitude, they are given glad tidings. When such people are struck by misfortune, they say:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.

Bear in mind that a chosen servant of God only grows in nearness to the Divine when he gives precedence to God over every affliction. In short, there is an aspect of this

relationship where God desires that His servants submit to His will. The meaning of prayer is when a human being expresses his desire and requests for something to happen. On certain occasions the desire of the Noble Lord ought to be given precedence. At times, however, Allah, who is Compassionate, fulfills the desire of His servant. The other aspect of this give and take relationship is expressed in the following verse:

ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

Pray unto Me; I will answer your prayer.

This is not a contradiction. When the situation at hand is different, there is no question of contradiction. In this particular instance, Allah the Exalted accepts the will of His servant.

A Condition for the Acceptance of Prayer

Bear well in mind that a person's prayer is accepted when he abandons heedlessness, sin and transgression for the sake of Allah Almighty. The more an individual grows in divine nearness, the greater he will partake of the fruits of the acceptance of prayer. This is why Allah the Exalted states:

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۖ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

And when My servants ask thee about Me, say: 'I am near. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way.'

At another place, Allah the Exalted states:

وَأَنَّى لَهُمُ التَّنَاقُشُ مِنْ مَكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ

But how can the attaining of faith be possible to them from a position so far-off.

In other words, why should I listen to the prayer of one who is distant from Me? A lesson has been given here based on what we generally observe in the law of nature. This does not mean that God cannot hear, for He is privy to the most hidden desires buried in our hearts. In fact, He is aware of even those desires which have not yet

come into existence. However, in this verse, Allah the Exalted has directed man's attention to attaining divine nearness and explains that just as a distant voice cannot be clearly heard, in the same manner, an individual who is plunged in heedlessness, sin and transgression, becomes distant from God. The further away a person grows from God, the more obstructed and improbable the possibility of the acceptance of their prayer becomes." (p. 92)

May Allah help each one among us to bear these teachings in mind and may we all remember them when we supplicate Allah. Incha Allah. Ameen.