

FRIDAY SERMON

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We will continue with the explanation that Hazrat Masih Maood (as) is giving about the search for Allah. He said:

“I will elaborate by providing an example. For instance, the Christians say that the Messiah son of Mary, who was born from the womb of a woman in the same manner that all human beings are born, and who ate and drank and defecated and urinated like other human beings, was God. Now, it is possible for an individual to love such a person, but the human intellect can never suggest that such a weak and powerless human being is God, nor can one accept that gods are born from the wombs of women. Now, as for the person whose very first step has landed on falsehood, how can it be expected that their next step will lead to the path of truth? Those rays which shine on the heart when one believes in a Living God, Who is the possessor of perfect attributes, can never be received by those who worship images of a mortal being that is weak and powerless!

As the saying goes: *A seeker has no opinion.*

A seeker must forgo all of his prejudice and preconceived beliefs, and then set out in search of doctrines that are founded on truth. Positive progress can only be expected when this is the case. For this purpose, the first brick ought to be God, and only then will the final brick be God. Haste is detrimental indeed and often becomes the cause for an unfortunate person being deprived. For example, if you do not remain in my company and leave quickly, and then state that there was no use in staying here and nothing was gained, do tell me, what harm will this do to me? There are many in the world today who make such statements, but they themselves are deprived and unfortunate. If one was to put some Euclidean diagrams before a child, it is possible that the child may find some attractive. However, the child's attraction to such illustrations is of no real benefit, because it is ignorant of the results that they produce, and has no idea of the benefits that may be derived from these drawings.

I have not only observed various critics of Islam, but have also collected the allegations that such people have levelled against Islam. I can truly say that wherever such ill-

informed people have raised allegations, it is precisely there that a treasure of wisdom and invaluable insights and verities are buried away. Such people have nothing in their hands except for foolishness and shortsightedness. By raising objections, such people have demonstrated that they are benighted human beings who possess crooked dispositions. Otherwise, they would not speak ill of this treasure trove of insights and verities. Therefore, I advise you to continue seeking the true essence with calmness and forbearance.

You are an individual who is in search of God. The best course of action for you is to first correct the doctrines that you hold. As a result of this, you will come to know who exactly that God is Whom you seek and quest. This will increase the level of your insight, and this insight, which wields a magnetic force to draw in love, will in turn foster a relationship of love between you and Allah Almighty. Without this, any claim of love is like the false fruit which vanishes after a few days.

You ought to remember always—and this is my belief—that the light of God cannot shine on anyone until that light descends upon them from heaven. It is true indeed that divine grace descends from heaven. Until and unless God Himself manifests His light upon a seeker, the pace at which he advances is no more than an insect, and so it should be. For such a person is entangled in countless forms of ignorance, darkness, and obstructions along the way. However, when divine light shines upon a person, his heart and mind is illuminated and becomes filled with light, whereafter they advance towards God at light speed.”

The Seeker: Your Holiness, I am not a follower of any religion.

His Holiness (as): If someone determines for himself that he will not believe in anything, I can say nothing—what can I possibly say? However, a sensible individual must compel himself to follow a path of some sort.

What is religion? It is the path that a person adopts for himself. Every individual must follow a ‘religion.’ Even a non-religious person who does not believe in God must follow some path, and that path is ‘religion.’ However, what calls for reflection is whether the path that an individual has chosen for themselves is one which leads to true perseverance, eternal bliss and joy, and never-ending tranquility. You see, the Arabic word for religion is *madh-hab* and this is a general term.

The literal meaning of this word is ‘where one walks,’ i.e. a path, and this is not specific to faith and religion alone. In every field and science, in geology, natural science, medicine, astronomy, and in other disciplines as well, experts all hold a *madh-hab*, i.e., a school of thought. No one can escape this because this is necessary for all human

beings. Just as the human soul requires a body, and meaning requires words and expression, in the same way, all people are bound by a ‘religion’ or set of beliefs to which they subscribe. My objective is not to debate in this instance whether people proclaim the name Allah, or God, or Parmeshwar.

My purpose at present is only to shine a light upon what people understand of the respective beings whom they call upon. I say you can use whatever name you please, but my question is how do you describe that being? What attributes do you ascribe to that being? The issue of divine attributes is one of primary significance and requires contemplation.

The Seeker: My understanding is that the purpose of religion is to rectify and reform a person’s inherent nature.

His Holiness (as): Let us take the example of a king. For example, there is King Edward VII. Now, we could refer to some other person by this title, but we would do so artificially, and this would not make them so. My only desire is for people to recognise the True God and to forsake all other forms of pretense, and this is what it means to restore one’s human nature.

What is Islam? The very name that Allah Almighty has given the religion of Islam is ‘the nature made by Allah’ (*fitratullah*). It is Islam alone that is the religion of nature. However, when does this reality become apparent? It becomes apparent when an individual remains in holy company with patience and steadfastness.

There are countless blessings in steadfastness. Just observe the honey bee and how it is able to produce an exquisite and beneficial substance like honey when it remains engaged in its work with persistence and effort. In the same manner, an individual who continues to search for God with determination ultimately finds Him. Not only does such an individual find God, it is my belief that they are able to see Him. Vast amounts of time and money must be spent for the acquisition of secular knowledge and this sheds light on the law that is applicable for the acquisition of spiritual knowledge. Our religion, which ought to be seen as the starting point for spiritual knowledge, is to first believe in the existence of God and then to develop an understanding of His attributes—such understanding which elevates one to a level of certainty. It is then that a person will develop insight into the being of Allah Almighty and His perfect attributes, and their soul will call out from within with absolute content that they have found God. When an individual develops such faith in the existence of Allah Almighty that they reach a level of certainty and feel that they have seen God, and when they attain an understanding of His attributes, such an individual develops a disgust for sin.

Even though previously the dispositions of such people would lean towards sin, when the aforementioned becomes the case, they naturally shun sin with abhorrence, and this is what we call repentance.

The concept that after one develops perfect faith in Allah Almighty one begins to abhor sin is an idea that can be easily understood. For example, there is arsenic and other poisons, or certain poisonous animals. Why do humans fear these things? The only reason is because experience demonstrates that these poisons, in a certain degree, take a man to death. We observe many who have consumed poison and then died, and it is for this very reason that one's disposition cannot be inclined in this direction, and in fact, one flees from such things. Now when this is the case, why do people commit a multitude of sins? Even if someone finds an insignificant sum of money lying on the ground, they will pick it up, despite being aware that a brief announcement would be sufficient to identify the person to whom the money belongs. I have seen that innocent children are killed over a mere twelve annas. A visit to the courts will show you the terrifying and bleak state of affairs that confronts us. People lie over petty matters, and an ocean of transgression and immorality surges forth. Why is this the case? For no other reason than the fact that there is a lack of faith in God. Man fears snakes and poisons because he considers them deadly and believes in the danger that is associated with them. If one possesses perfect faith in Allah Almighty, I cannot understand why one would not loathe sin.

Two things are necessary for human beings: to refrain from evil and to hasten towards virtue. Now, there are two further aspects of virtue: to forsake evil and propagate goodness. A person cannot be complete by the mere eschewing of evil; this must be coupled with the propagation of virtue, which means to benefit others.

This demonstrates the degree to which a person has reformed themselves. These ranks are attained when a person develops faith in the attributes of God Almighty and a knowledge of these attributes as well. Until this becomes the case, one cannot even save oneself from vice, let alone benefit others, which is a far greater quality. There are many people who are in awe of kings and even fear the Indian Penal Code to some extent. There are many people who do not break the law, yet they are fearless when it comes to disobeying the law of God, the Best of judges. Can there be any other reason except that people do not believe in Him? This is the sole reason.

In short, a person reaches the stage where he abstains from sins when he possesses faith in God. The second stage ought to be for one to search for those ways that were followed by the chosen servants of God Almighty. In truth, there is only one path that was followed by all those righteous and chosen ones of God who have come to the

world and benefited from the grace of God Almighty. That path can be found by first ascertaining the manner in which God Almighty dealt with them. The first stage of abstaining from sin is one which can be achieved through the manifestation of God's attributes of majesty, in that God Almighty is the enemy of those who commit sin. The second stage is achieved through the manifestation of God's beauty.

Ultimately, until a person is granted strength and power from Allah Almighty, which is referred to as the Holy Spirit in Islamic terminology, nothing can be done. This is a power that is received from God Almighty. As soon as this power descends, tranquility fills the heart, and a love and fondness for virtue is fostered in one's nature. With pleasure and joy, in the likeness of a child who happily eats a delicious treat, such an individual naturally hastens to perform the same good deed, which others must strain and burden themselves to do. In the same manner, when one develops a relationship with God Almighty and His Holy Spirit descends upon him, good deeds appear to one as though they were a refreshing and fragrant sherbet. The individual in question begins to see the beauty in good deeds and hastens towards them uncontrollably. Even the thought of sin causes his soul to tremble, as it were.

These matters are of such a nature that I cannot express them fully in words. For these are states of the heart and one can only understand them fully by experiencing them. It is then that fresh and vivid forms of light are granted to such a one. "(Malfuzaat, Vol. 3, p. 128-133)

May we all reflect upon these words and at the same time assess how much we have learned about Allah and how far we are doing what is needed to know Him indeed. May Allah help us all. Ameen.