

FRIDAY SERMON

24 February 2023

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We will insha Allah continue from where we left off last week. Hazrat Masih Maoood (as) was responding to a question that he was asked about the holding of “*Ameen ceremony*” where guests were invited. The ceremony was for three of his children and he was asked a question about the compatibility of such a ceremony with the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw). We read part of his answer last week. Today we continue from where we left off. He said:

“Therefore, at the present time, people have fallen prey to serious error in relation to what constitutes a practice of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the reality of an innovation in the Faith. They suffer from a grave misconception and cannot differentiate between the Sunnah and an innovation in the faith. They have abandoned the exemplary model of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and have invented many practices of their own accord considering them to be an ample form of guidance for their lives, even though these practices are leading them astray. When a person is able to distinguish between a practice of the Holy Prophet(saw) and an innovation in the Faith, and follows the way of the Holy Prophet(saw), they are saved from dangers. However, an individual who does not differentiate between the two, and blurs the line between the Sunnah and innovations in the Faith, cannot have a good end.

Whatever Allah the Exalted has stated in the Holy Quran is perfectly clear and evident, and the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has demonstrated this in practice. The life of the Holy Prophet(saw) is a perfect example.

However, despite this, there are times when independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) is required as well. Where a person—due to their own weakness—is unable to find a precedent in the Holy Quran or the practice of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, they ought to employ independent reasoning. For example, if the food that is distributed to the guests at weddings is purely to boast and flaunt one’s status, this would be an act of ostentation and arrogance, and would therefore be unlawful. However, it is not unlawful for a person to offer people food out of kindness if the intention is solely to give practical expression to the verse:

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ

And the bounty of thy Lord, proclaim.

One may seek to act upon the following instruction as well:

وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

And they spend out of what We have provided for them.

Therefore, if a person arranges a function with this intention seeking nothing in return except for the pleasure of Allah Almighty, they could serve a feast to 100 people or 100,000 people, and this would not be forbidden. The actual basis rests on one's intention; if the intention is ill and corrupt, this turns a perfectly permissible and lawful action into an unlawful one. There is a well-known story that a holy man held a feast for which he lighted forty lanterns. Certain people commented that such extravagance ought to be avoided, so the man said: 'Put out the lanterns that I have lit by way of ostentation.' The people tried to put out the lanterns but not a single one of them could be put out. This demonstrates that sometimes when the same action is performed by two separate individuals, one of them can be guilty of sin while the other earns a spiritual reward. This difference results from a difference of intention. It is written that in the Battle of Badr, a man strutted forward among the Muslim ranks with a proud gait, and it is clear that this is forbidden by Allah the Exalted. When the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, observed this, he said: 'This mannerism is reprehensible in the sight of God Almighty, but at this time it is endearing to God, because in this instance, the purpose is to express the greatness and grandeur of Islam and influence the opposing party with awe.' One can identify many such cases and examples, which ultimately establish that the following Hadith is absolutely true:

deeds are based on intentions.

Moreover, I am forever consumed in thought and reflection so that I may carve out a path by which the greatness and glory of Allah Almighty may be manifested, and so that the people develop a faith in Him; a faith which protects one from sin and draws them closer to virtues.

I am also cognizant of the fact that Allah the Exalted has blessed me with countless bounties and favours, and so I am duty-bound to express these blessings.

Therefore, whenever I perform any action, my motive and intention is to express the glory of Allah Almighty. This is also the case with the *ameen* ceremony that I have arranged. Since my sons are a sign from Allah the Exalted and each and every one of them is a living example of prophecies from God Almighty, I deem it an obligation to appreciate these signs of Allah Almighty. For they establish the truth of the prophethood of Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and the Holy Quran, and even serve as proof of the existence of Allah the Exalted Himself. On this occasion, when they have completed their reading of God's Word, I was asked to write a few poetic verses of supplication on this occasion, which express gratitude to

Allah Almighty for His bounty and grace. As I have just mentioned, I remain forever consumed in thoughts to bring about reformation. I consider this function to be most blessed indeed and deem it appropriate to propagate the message of God in this manner.

Therefore, this was my intention. As such, when I began to compose my verses, and I had written the following line:

The root of every good is righteousness.

The second line of this verse was sent down to me by way of revelation, as such:

If this root is preserved, everything will survive.

This makes it evident that even Allah the Exalted was pleased with my action.

The Holy Quran, in reality, imparts a teaching of righteousness; this is its ultimate cause. If one does not adopt righteousness, then even one's Prayers are of no value and can become a key to hell. Therefore, Sa'di alludes to this very point and states:

The key to the gates of hell is such a Prayer;

which you lengthen only to show the people.

Anything that is done as an act of display before the people is completely worthless, irrespective of how virtuous the deed may be in itself, and on the contrary, becomes a cause for punishment. It is written in *Ihya-ul-Ulum* that the religious mendicants of our age show the people that they worship for the sake of God Almighty, but in reality, they do not worship for the sake of God, they worship for the sake of mankind. The author has written strange and peculiar accounts of these people. In relation to their clothing, he states that these mendicants believe that if they wear clean white clothes this will damage their reputation, but they are also aware that if they wear dirty clothes this will dishonour them. Therefore, the practice adopted by these people in order to mingle with the affluent is to wear high quality, elegant clothing, but colour it with dye. Similarly, they employ strange and unusual methods to show people that they are devoted worshippers.

For example, in order to show people that they fast, they will visit someone when it is mealtime and when the host insists that they join them for food, they will say:

'You eat, I will not eat. I must excuse myself,' and what this really means is 'I am fasting.' This is the state of affairs that have been written in their context.

Hence, to do something for the sake of the world, and to feed one's own esteem and renown, can never attract the pleasure of God Almighty. This is the state of the world even in the present era, inasmuch that everything has shifted from its proper place; worship and alms are offered as acts of show. A few traditions have taken the place of righteous deeds. Therefore, the purpose of uprooting non-religious customs is so that

any action or statement that is at odds with the instruction of God or His Messenger may be abolished. When we call ourselves Muslims and all of our words and actions must be in accordance with the will of Allah Almighty, why should we care about the world? Any action, which goes against the pleasure of Allah Almighty and His Messenger, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, must be forsaken and abandoned. One must act within the limits set by God and act upon the counsel of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. This is what it means to revive the Sunnah. There is no harm in anything which does not contradict the exhortations of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and the commandments of Allah Almighty, and which is free from ostentation, but rather done to show gratitude to God and express His favours. In some cases, Muslim scholars will take such an extreme position that I have heard that one Muslim cleric has issued a religious edict prohibiting travel by train, and he would even say that it is unlawful to use the post office to send letters. Now can there be any doubt in the fact that such people are fools or at least half-mad? This is absurd. What a person ought to reflect upon is whether a particular action is in accordance with or against the directive of Allah Almighty, and whether their action is a self-invented religious practice, and whether the action encourages association of partners with God. If none of this is the case and the course of action does not corrupt one's faith, then there is no harm in following through with the deed in question. One should just keep the following Hadith in consideration:

Deeds are based on intentions.

I have also heard that some Muslim clerics forbid the study of subjects like syntax and morphology, and other fields of study. They class this as an innovation in the Faith and state that these fields of study did not exist in the time of the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, but rather, were introduced at a later time. Some clerics have even stated that it is a sin to engage in battle with guns and cannons. It is a mistake to even doubt the stupidity of these people. The Holy Quran says that you should prepare in the same manner that they prepare.

So, these are issues which relate to independent reasoning and they are heavily influenced by intention. As such, Allah Almighty knows that this action of mine is purely an expression of gratitude to Him" (p. 298-302).

May Allah help each one among us to deeply delve into these wise words of the Promised Messiah (as) which are as relevant today as they were when he first pronounced them more than 120 years ago.