

FRIDAY SERMON

4th August 2023

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Incha Allah we will be continuing with another Jalsa Salana speech that Hazrat Masih Maood (as) pronounced at his last Jalsa Salana in 1907. Last week, we finished with the Promised Messiah's (as) speech of 27th December. Today we are starting with his speech of the 28th December 1907. He said:

“A part of the speech I gave yesterday remained undelivered because the speech could not be finished as I was indisposed. Therefore, I address you again today. Life is uncertain. No one knows who—from among those present here today—will still be alive next year and who would have died.

It is my duty to impress upon people in every way that the present time is extremely precarious. God Almighty has warned me over and over through revelation concerning an even more perilous time to come to the extent that it appears that the Day of Judgement is near and fast approaching. As I had explained yesterday, deaths are occurring in many different forms—there is the plague, the epidemics, the famine, the earthquakes. When such calamities befall, worldly people lose their minds and are seized with terrible grief and suffering and can find no way out of it. The Holy Quran alludes to this:

تَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَرَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَرَىٰ

You see people as if they are intoxicated though they are not intoxicated in any way. The fact is that they have lost their mind due to extreme grief and fright and have no courage left.

None other than a God-fearing person can show patience in such circumstances. In religious matters no one can show patience without *taqwa* [righteousness]. Who can endure in the face of a calamity except the one who has aligned his will with the will of God? A person can stumble and become an atheist through a minor loss, unless his faith is firm prior to it. One who does not have a bond with God Almighty has no ability to endure a calamity.

Materialistic individuals end up denying even the existence of God in such calamities. The design of this world is such that adversities are but essential. Of all the people who have lived in the world, who can claim that he has never faced any misfortune?

For some, the misfortune befalls their children; for some, their wealth; and for some, their honour. In short, everyone has to face some misfortune and trial. There is no escape from it in the world. It is an essential part of this world.

An Arab poet of earlier times writes:

I have seen great adversities in this world.

Anyone who lives for eighty years like me will most certainly face some.

Misfortunes of the world are, indeed, only for a few days. In the end all die, some sooner and others later.

There are two types of hardships in the path of the Faith. The first type are the hardships associated with the Shariah, such as *Salat* [obligatory Prayers], Fasting, Hajj [the Pilgrimage], and *Zakat* [almsgiving]. One interrupts his work for Prayer and goes to the mosque even if it means a loss to him. In the cold weather, he rises in the latter part of the night [for Prayer].

During the month of Ramadan, he endures the day-long hunger and thirst [of fasting]. In the Hajj, he suffers the hardships of travel. In *Zakat*, he surrenders his hard-earned money to others. All these are the hardships of

the Shariah and are, thus, the means of reward for him and make him advance towards God.

However, in all these, man is given some latitude and he finds a way to make it easy for himself. In the winter season he heats up the water for ablution. If he cannot perform [the Prayer] standing up due to an illness, he does so while seated. In Ramadan, he can have a large meal during the *sahar* [period before daybreak]. Some even spend more than usual on food during the month of fasting.

In short, one continually seeks ways to find some ease in these hardships of the Shariah. This is why it does not cleanse fully and the stages of spiritual journey are not covered expeditiously.

However, man has no option in the afflictions that descend from heaven and they must be endured anyway. That is why man attains nearness to God through them.

Both of the hardships—of Shariah and of nature—have been mentioned by God Almighty in the Holy Quran.

Hardships of the Shariah have been mentioned in Part 1 of the Holy Quran: اَذْلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۚ بُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۝ Meaning that believers are those who believe in God while He is unseen, and establish their Prayers. That is to say, hundreds of thoughts distract their hearts but they remain steady in their Prayer by focusing on God Almighty over and over again. They spend out of the wealth God bestows upon them. These are the hardships of the Faith, but one cannot fully rely upon them for spiritual reward, because man shows negligence in many issues. Many observe just the outer form of Prayer being oblivious to its substance and essence.

For this reason, heavenly hardships have also been provided for the purpose of man's advancement in his [spiritual] rank. God Almighty has also mentioned this in the Holy Quran where He says:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۚ وَبَشِيرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۖ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

“And We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to those who are patient;, when a misfortune overtakes them, they say, ‘Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.’ It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is these who are rightly guided" (2:156-158).

These adversities come directly from God. At times, man is afflicted with a terrible fear; he is constantly fearful that the matter would take the worst turn. At times, poverty and hunger become his lot; he must manage everything with a small pittance. Sometimes his wealth suffers loss. His business and trade go awry or is stolen by thieves. At times, the fruits suffer a loss; meaning that, fruits go bad, crops get destroyed, or the beloved children succumb to death.

In the Arabic lexicon, progeny is also called “fruit”. Trial through progeny is also very difficult. Many write to me in desperation to pray that they may be blessed with children. Trials through one’s children can be so severe that some become atheists due to the death of their children. Sometimes children are so dear to one that for him, they become like an associate with God. Some become atheists, apostates, and faithless on account of their children. Some become Christians for the sake of their children if they become Christian. Some children die at a young age and become the cause for their parents to lose their faith.

Allah the Exalted, however, is not cruel. When one shows patience in the face of severe hardship—the greater the hardship, the greater is his reward. God Almighty is *Rahim* [Merciful], *Ghafur* [Forgiver], and *Sattar* [Concealer of weaknesses].

He does not inflict hardship on man so that he would disassociate from the Faith upon suffering the hardship. Rather, the hardships come to spur him forward [toward God]. There is a saying among the mystics that in

times of trial, a sinner pulls back but a righteous person pushes forward all the more.

According to one account, eleven sons of the Holy Prophet (saw) had died [in his lifetime]. The lofty ranks that the Prophets and Messengers achieve are not achieved by such ordinary things that can be accomplished easily and comfortably. They were afflicted with grave trials and tribulations but they endured them with patience and steadfastness. Then they were bestowed great ranks by God Almighty. Consider the magnitude of the trial faced by Abraham (as). He took a knife in his hand so as to slaughter his son and did slice the throat of his son in his own estimation only to find that it was a ram, and not his son, under the knife. Abraham succeeded in his test and God saved his son too. God was pleased with Abraham that he had not held back in his own estimation.

It was the grace of God that the son survived. Otherwise, Abraham would have slaughtered him. For this, he [Abraham] was given the title of ‘the Truthful’ . And it is written in the Torah that God told Abraham: ‘O Abraham! Look at the stars. Can you count them? In the same way your progeny will be countless.’

The adversity was short-lived and it passed, but how immense was its reward! Today all the *Sadat* [descendants of the Holy Prophet (saw)], the Quraishites, and the Jews and other nations call themselves the children of Abraham (as). It was an event that only lasted a few moments but he received such a tremendous reward from God. The fact is that the *taqwa* [righteousness] stands proven when one is afflicted with some adversity. When one discards all other concerns and gives precedence to the concern of God—abandoning a life of comfort and embracing a life of bitterness—only then does man attain real *taqwa*. The inner condition of man cannot be rectified merely by formal Prayers and Fasting. It is necessary that hardships should come...

None of the Prophets and Messengers and the Truthful of the past progressed through mundane activities. The secret of their elevated stations was that they made perfect alignment with God Almighty. Even if all the children of a believer are slaughtered and he is faced with hardships even beside that, he continues to persist marching forward under all circumstances. Despite thousands of weaknesses, man shows loyalty to his sincere friend. How is it, then, that God, who is *Rahman* [Gracious] and *Rahim* [Merciful], would not show loyalty to you? Love God Almighty such that even if you have a thousand of your children on one side and God on the other, you prefer God and disregard all the children. Hardships have befallen all the Prophets. None has remained without them. For this reason, there are great rewards for those who bear hardships. God Almighty has said in the Holy Quran, addressing His Prophet (saw), give glad tidings to those who show patience who—in the face of adversity—say, ‘There was a time when we did not even exist, God Almighty has created us, and we are His property and it is to Him that we shall return.’ For such people, there are glad tidings. The blessings which are achieved through these hardships and the special glad tidings bestowed from God Almighty, cannot be achieved through Prayer, Fasting, and *Zakat*. If one discharges his duty of *Salat* properly, it is a laudable thing, but the strike that comes from God Almighty is most precise and it is through it that guidance and access is attained.” (p. 105)

We will stop here for today. *Incha Allah* we will continue next time. I think that in this part of the speech there is plenty of good advice that has been given to us by Hazrat Masih Maood (as). We should think about them and let them be our guide in life. May Allah help each one among us to value these words and give them their due importance. *Ameen*.