

FRIDAY SERMON

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Alhamdolillah we have reached the midst of the month of Ramadhan. May Allah help each fasting person with the necessary capacity to complete his fast for the whole month. You will recall that Allah says in the last part of verse 186 of Sura Al Baqarah that “He desires ease for us He does not desire hardship for us”. In other words, if one cannot bear to fast because of illness or travel or any other valid reason, one should fast on other days when it is easier to fast. So, we should always try and do our best “to complete the fast and to glorify Allah as He has guided us to do.” Therefore, we should all motivate ourselves to continue to fast till the end and we should fill the time we are fasting and even the night with praying during the night “*qiyam ul layle*”, with seeking forgiveness for all our sins and with long supplications especially in our sajdahs and with His remembrance instead of enjoying chats or futile conversations not quite knowing what needs to be done with free time. My prayer is that Allah help each one among us and myself to understand why we are here. With years of searching and understanding, one will eventually get to the real purpose of one’s life. Fasting is one of the means for us to achieve that purpose. May Allah open its secrets for us. Ameen.

Today incha Allah, we will speak about the central message of the following verse:

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

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۚ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

From this verse, we understand that Allah is near us. Allah tells the Holy Prophet Muhammad(saw) to tell those who inquire about Him that He is near (*inni qareeb*).

Then He gives the proof of His being near. And what is that proof. “*Ojibo dawataad da’aae inza da’aani*” “He answers the supplicant when he/she supplicates Him.” However, the supplicant also has a responsibility. “*fal yastajeebouli wal you’menou bi la’allahoum yarshodoune*”. He/she is expected to “respond to the call of Allah and believe in Him if he desires to be on the path that will lead to Him.” Hence, it is our duty to know what “properly guided” means. It just means that we should respond to the message of the Holy Quran. It means we should read it regularly and try to understand it and strive to lead a life according to its teachings and also to follow the example of the Holy Prophet Mohammad(saw). This is our lifetime mission. To know who is Allah, it is not sufficient that we should just hear about the experience of others about Him. It is imperative that we have personal experience of His answering our prayers and this will increase our faith (*imaan*) and certainty (*yaqeen*) in Allah.

I have said this several times in the past but I will repeat it because we should never tire of saying it over and over again. What I mean is that we should strive to pray every day with concentration and we should understand what we are saying in Namaz. Most often, it is through our daily prayers that we supplicate Allah. When we read the words of the daily prayers, we should understand what we are saying or else it would be just words. Hazrat Masih Maood(as) told us that we should repeat the words “You alone do we worship and to You alone do we seek help” (*Iyyaka na’bodo wa iyyaka nasta’een*) a few times and absorb its meanings and you will see how the quality of your prayers will change. We should do our best to upgrade our prayers by feeling the increasing presence of Allah in it. We should train ourselves to have our mind concentrate on Allah away from worldly matters. However, this is an improvement that comes with time. But we need to start practicing in order to improve as we grow older. It is not sufficient to ask someone to pray for you. One should do one’s best to improve the level of one’s salaah and the level of one’s supplications in it. Each one is responsible for his or her own self and each individual will be questioned for his deeds. May Allah make that account easy for each one among us and for all Muslims who sincerely choose to follow the path of Muhammad(saw). Ameen. You might recall that this is what we usually say when we hear the imam reading the last verse of Surah Al Ghashia in the second *rakaat* of the Friday prayer, namely “*summa inna alayna hisabahoum*” which we translate as “*then surely it is for Us to call them to account*”. All those who hear these words respond by “*Allahoumma hasibni hisaban yasira*” “O our Lord make my reckoning

an easy one". This is a prayer that we should always remember and offer so that our reckoning could be easy.

Now we will try to remind ourselves of some verses of the Holy Quran, some hadiths and some extracts of the writings of the Hazrat Masih Maood(as) about supplications.

Verses from the Holy Quran:

1. "*Ud'ouni astajib lakoum*"

Call upon me and I will respond to you (40:61)

2. "*Amman yujeebul mudhtarra idhaa da'aahu wa yakshifus-sooa*"

"Who answers the call of the distressed when he invokes Him and removes his distress?"(27:63)

I suggest that members take care to remember these verses. Try to read them in context and meditate upon them and they will definitely be of great help in time of need incha Allah.

Now we will mention a few hadiths about *du'a*(supplication).

The Holy Prophet Muhammad(saw) said:

1. الدعاء هو العبادة

"Du'a (supplication) is worship."

From this hadith, we understand the need and importance of supplication in our prayers. Allah is independent, self-sufficient. He does not need anyone. We all depend upon Him. When we pray, He appreciates we supplicate to Him for our needs and to no one else. He is Most powerful and He can provide everyone his individual needs without any loss in His treasures or His Possessions. Man, unfortunately, falls prey to the attacks of the Evil one and thinks that he is independent of Allah. Allah does not like that attitude at all. In several verses of the Holy Quran, this mindset is condemned. By saying that supplication to Allah is the essence of worship, the Holy Prophet Muhammad(saw) was drawing attention to how much we should feel ourselves dependent upon Allah. We seek His Mercy by supplicating to Him and we should always be doing that throughout our life.

2. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "A slave becomes nearest to his Rabb when he is in prostration. So, increase supplications in prostrations."

So, we should all try to stay longer in our prostration and keep making supplications for all our needs or for averting evil. May Allah help each one among us to be among those who always seek blessings from Him through our prayers to Him. Ameen.

Now we will read one or two extracts from the writings of Hazrat Masih Maood(as) about du'a. Explaining how someone can be truly guided, he said:

“First, a solemn resolve and a concerted effort to get rid of sinful life as far as it lies in one’s power. The second condition is prayer; one should always beseech God that He may rid him of the sinful life with His own hand, and kindle such a fire in his heart as may reduce all evil to ashes, and grant him such power that he may be able to overcome all carnal passions. He should keep imploring God until the time comes when a Divine light descends upon his heart and a bright ray falls upon his being to dispel all darkness to eliminate his weaknesses and to bring about a righteous change in him, for prayer undoubtedly has great power. If the dead can be brought back to life it is only through prayer; if captives can win freedom, it is only through prayer; if the impure are to be purified it can only be done through prayer. **But to pray is akin to dying.** The third condition is to keep the company of the righteous and the perfect ones because one lamp lights another.” (Lecture Sialkot, p. 47-48)

“He who supplicates God at the time of difficulty and distress and seeks the resolution of his difficulties from Him achieves satisfaction and **true prosperity** from God Almighty provided he carries his supplication to its limit. Even if he does not achieve the purpose of his supplication, he is bestowed some other kind of satisfaction and contentment by God Almighty and does not experience frustration. In addition, his faith is strengthened and his certainty increases. But the one who in his supplication does not turn towards God Almighty remains blind all the time and dies blind....

He who supplicates with the sincerity of his soul is never truly frustrated. That prosperity which cannot be achieved through riches and authority and health, but which is in the hand of God and He bestows it in whatever shape He wills, is bestowed through perfect prayer.

If God Almighty so wills, a **sincere and righteous person** in the midst of his distress achieves such delight after supplication which an emperor cannot enjoy on the imperial throne. This is true success which is bestowed in the end on those who pray.” [Ayyam-us-Sulh, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 14, p. 237]

The last extract is from Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani(ra) but it is from the Promised Messiah's book "the blessings of prayer". It says:

"That is to say, if you desire to become an accepted one of God, then believe with utmost certainty and understand that your hands, your feet, your tongue, your eyes, and your whole being, and all its organs, are like idols in your way, and all other creation is similarly an idol barring your path. Your children, your wife, the worldly objectives you wish to achieve, worldly riches, worldly honour and prestige, every worldly hope and fear, your reliance or trust in anyone or anything, your fear of being harmed by anyone, all these are idols in your way. So do not become subservient to any of these idols, and do not lose your way in pursuit of them. That is, have recourse to them within the bounds of the shariah and the way of the righteous. If you succeed in this you will become [precious as] the red brimstone and your status will be raised beyond people's imagination, and God shall make you heir to His Prophets and Messenger(saw), which means that all their knowledge, wisdom and blessings, which had disappeared into obscurity and oblivion, will be granted afresh to you, and you will reach the highest level of sainthood, and none after you shall be able to rise higher. Your prayers, your fortified resolve, and your blessings will relieve people of their anguish; the famine-stricken will be granted rain and crops will grow; the affliction and anguish of every low and high, and even the troubles of kings shall be alleviated through your attention and prayers; the Hand of Providence shall be with you, whichever direction it takes you will be guided in the same way; the Eternal Voice will beckon you to itself, which means that whatever flows from your tongue will be from God and it will be blessed; and you will be made a successor to all the righteous servants of Allah who were granted knowledge before you; a kind of power of creation will be bestowed on you, i.e., your attention and your prayer will exercise control in the world; if you then wish to turn the existing into non-existing, and vice versa, it will come to pass; extraordinary and miraculous things will take place at your hand; Divine secrets shall be revealed to you and you shall be given understanding of subtle and profound matters of Divine knowledge, of which you are considered to be worthy and deserving."

May Allah help us to understand these words and to implement all the aforementioned advice in the month of Ramadan and during all the days of our life.
Incha Allah. Ameen.