

FRIDAY SERMON

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Last week we ended reading the deep insight of Hazrat Masih Maood(as) about *Istighfaar*. He explained how fundamental it is for each one among us to cultivate the habit of reciting these words of forgiveness very often in our life. So, we will continue with some more extracts on this subject and we will also speak about Salvation. Hazrat Masih Maood(as) said:

“*Istighfar* and *Taubah* (repentance) are two separate matters. From one point of view, *Istighfar* has priority over repentance, inasmuch as *Istighfar* is the help and strength which are obtained from God and repentance means standing on one’s own feet. It is the way of God that when a person seeks help from Him, He bestows strength and with that strength the supplicant stands on his own feet and thus possesses the faculty to do good, which is called ‘turning to God’. This is the natural sequence of it. It is appointed for seekers that they should seek help from God in every condition. Till a seeker obtains strength from God, he can do nothing. The strength for repentance is acquired after *Istighfar*. If there is no *Istighfar*, the faculty of repentance dies. If you will thus follow up *Istighfar* with repentance, the result will be as set out in the verse:

‘He will provide for you a goodly provision until an appointed term.’ (11:4)

This is the way of God, that those who follow up *Istighfar* with repentance will achieve their cherished grades. Every sense has its limits within which it achieves its high grades; not everyone can be a Prophet or a Messenger or a Truthful (*Siddiq*) or a Testifier (*Shahid*).” [Malfuzaat, vol. II, pp. 68-69]

He said further:

“Remember, the Muslims have been bestowed two things; one for obtaining strength and the other for the practical demonstration of the strength that has been obtained. *Istighfar* is for obtaining strength. It is also called seeking help. The *Sufis* have said that as physical strength and power is fostered through exercise, in the same way, *Istighfar* is spiritual exercise. Through it, the soul obtains strength and the heart achieves steadfastness. He who desires strength should do *Istighfar*.” [Malfuzaat, vol. II, p. 67]

“The gates of the grace and benevolence of God Almighty are never closed. If a person turns to Him with a true heart and in sincerity, then He is Forgiving and Merciful and accepts repentance. It is great impertinence and disrespect to speculate how many sinners will God Almighty forgive. The treasures of His mercy are unlimited. He lacks nothing and

His doors are not shut upon. All those who arrive before God shall attain high ranks. This is a sure promise. The one who despairs of God Almighty, and his last moment arrives in a state of heedlessness, is most unfortunate and ill-fated because at that time the door is closed. [Malfuzat, vol. III, pp. 296-297]

“There are some people who are aware of sin and there are others who are not even aware of it. That is why God Almighty has prescribed *Istighfar* in all circumstances so that man should occupy himself with *Istighfar* with regard to all sins, whether external or internal, and whether he has knowledge of them or not. A person should seek forgiveness for every type of sin whether of the hands, or of feet, or of tongue, or of nose, or of ears, or of eyes. In these days we should supplicate like Adam:

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا. وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

‘Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the lost.’(7:24)

This prayer has already been accepted. Do not live heedlessly. He who is not heedless would not be involved in any calamity that is beyond his strength. No misfortune arrives without Divine command. That is why I have been taught the prayer in a revelation:

“Rabbe koullo shay’in khademoka rabbe fahfazni wansourni warhamni”

“O my Lord, everything serves You. So, O my Lord, protect me and help me and have mercy on me.” [Malfuzaat, vol. IV, pp. 275-276]

The circumstance of the reception of this prayer is so interesting that I wish to share it with you. In an entry in Tazkira, book of dreams, visions and revelations of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) there is an entry dated *December 6, 1902* which is as follows:

“Last night I was in such a state that if I had not received Divine revelation, I would have been proved right in thinking that my last moment had arrived. While I was in this condition, I was overtaken by sleep and saw in my dream that I was in a cul-de-sac and three buffaloes were coming towards me. When one of them approached me, I beat it away and the same happened with the second one. Then the third advanced towards me. I felt that it was so strong that there was no way of deliverance from it. While this was passing through my mind, Allah the Almighty so ordained that it turned away. Taking advantage of this I slipped through brushing against it and began to run. I was thinking that it would be running after me but I did not look back. Then the following Prayer was inspired by Allah the Almighty in a dream upon my heart:

“Rabbe koullo shay’in khademoka rabbe fahfazni wansourni warhamni”

[Arabic] O my Lord, everything serves You. So, O my Lord, protect me and help me and have mercy on me.

It was conveyed to me that this is the **great name of God** and that whoever supplicates in these terms would be delivered from every affliction. [al-Badr, vol. 1, no. 7, December 12, 1902)

Commenting further on this supplication Hazrat Masih Maood(as) said:

“This prayer is an amulet and protection... I will henceforth make this supplication regularly in my Prayers, and you should also do it.”

“The greatest matter in it, which teaches the True Unity—that is, assures that Allah the Glorious alone can cause any harm or impart any benefit—is that it teaches us that [O Allah] everything is in Your service, and no harmful thing can cause any damage without Your will and permission.” (Tazkira P571)

I encourage all our brothers and sisters to follow the instructions of Hazrat Masih Maood(as) and to make all the prayers that he has taught in these extracts and experience their blessings insha Allah. This will increase our faith in what we believe and it will motivate us to continue on the right path that we have taken insha Allah.

In another extract Hazrat Masih Maood(as) said:

“Heedlessness arises from unknown causes. Sometimes without a person knowing it, his heart is suddenly afflicted with rust and darkness. Hence the need for *Istighfar*. It means that one should not suffer from that rust and darkness. The Christians foolishly argue that *Istighfar* shows that the supplicant has been sinful. The true meaning of *Istighfar* is that no sin should be committed. If *Istighfar* means forgiveness of sins committed, then what is the phrase for suppressing sins in future? *Ghafara* and *kafara* have the same connotation. All Prophets needed *Istighfar*. The more a person supplicates by way of *Istighfar* the more innocent he is. Its true meaning is that God saved him. To call someone innocent means that he has been forgiven.” [Malfuzat, vol. IV, p. 255]

In another extract he said:

“Then arise and repent and win the pleasure of God through good works. Remember that the punishment of wrong beliefs is after death. Being a Hindu or a Christian or a Muslim will be determined on the Day of Judgement. But a person, who goes beyond the limit in wrongdoing, transgression, disobedience and vice, is punished in this life. Such a one cannot escape God’s chastisement. So, hasten to win God’s pleasure and before the dreadful day arrives namely the day of intensity of the plague of which the Prophets have warned, make your peace with God. He is very Benevolent. Through the one moment of the repentance that melts the heart, He can forgive the sins spread over seventy years. Do not say that repentance is not accepted. Remember that you cannot be saved by your deeds. It is grace that saves and not deeds. Benevolent and Merciful Lord, bestow Thy grace upon all of us. We are Thy servants and have fallen down upon Thy threshold. Amin. [Lecture Lahore, *Ruhani Khaza'in*, vol. 20, p. 174]

Speaking about salvation Hazrat Masih Maood(as) said:

“Man having arrived in this house of darkness cannot attain salvation unless, being himself honoured by the converse of God, or keeping company with someone who is the recipient of sure revelation and who has witnessed clear signs, he arrives at the certain knowledge that he has a God Who is All-Powerful, Benevolent and Ever Merciful, and that Islam which is his faith is in fact true and the Judgement Day and heaven and hell are realities. As a matter of tradition all Muslims believe in the existence of God and in the truth of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), but this faith has no sure foundation.

Through such weak faith it is not possible to be deeply affected and to cultivate the true hatred for sin. [Nuzul-ul-Masih, *Ruhani Khaza'in*, vol. 18, pp. 485-486]

“It is a pity that most people are unaware of the true meaning of salvation. According to the Christians, salvation means deliverance from the punishment of sin. This is not the true meaning of salvation. It is possible that a person may not commit adultery or theft, or bear false witness, or kill anyone, or commit any other sin so far as he knows, and yet be unacquainted with salvation, **for salvation means the achievement of that eternal prosperity for which human nature hungers and thirsts**. It is achieved only through the personal love of God after His full understanding and the establishment of a perfect relationship with Him and its condition is that love should surge up on both sides....

For a seeker after truth the only question is how to achieve true prosperity which **should be the means of eternal joy and happiness**. The sign of a true religion is that it should carry one to that prosperity. Through the guidance of the Holy Qur'an, we learn that that eternal prosperity is found in the **true understanding** of God Almighty and His holy and perfect and personal love, and in perfect faith which **should create a lover's restlessness in the heart**. These are a few words and yet even a volume cannot set forth a complete exposition of them. [Chashma-e-Masihi, *Ruhani Khaza'in*, vol. 20, pp. 359-360]

To clarify this matter, he wrote:

“What the Holy Qur'an says in this context is summarized below:

O My servants, do not despair of Me. I am Ever Merciful and Benevolent and cover up sins and forgive them and am more Merciful towards you than anyone else. No one will have mercy on you as I have. Love Me more than you love your fathers for I am greater in love than they are. If you come to Me I shall forgive all your sins and if you repent, I shall accept your repentance. If you advance towards Me slowly, I shall run to you. He who seeks Me shall find Me and he who turns to Me shall find My door open. I forgive the sins of a penitent even if they are more than the mountains. My mercy upon you is great and My wrath is little because you are My creatures. I have created you and therefore My mercy comprises all of you. [Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, *Ruhani Khaza'in*, vol. 23, p. 56]

We will stop here for today. Our brothers and sisters should reflect on these extracts and wonder whether each one among us is doing what it takes to achieve the true objective of our life, i.e., to know our Lord. May Allah help us to be among those lucky few that He would elect. Ameen