

FRIDAY SERMON

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So, the long expected Holy month of Ramadan has dawned upon us again. Allah has showed His mercy once again and we are still here to try to do what our Lord demands of us in this blessed month. However, much we would wish to be grateful to Allah for helping us to witness this great month once again will be still not adequate. So, we begin the month with the good intention of fasting throughout the 29 or 30 days as it is prescribed by the Shariah. We hope and pray that Allah help us to fast in a way that He accepts these fasts from us, however weak we are.

From Ruku 23 of Sura Al Baqarah we read as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ
أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۚ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ ۚ فَمَن دَرَ
طَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُ ۚ وَأَن تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Its translation is as follows:

“O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil.

The prescribed fasting is for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast only with great difficulty is an expiation—the feeding of a poor man. And who so does good of his own accord it is better for him. And fasting is good for you, if you only knew.”

(2:183-4)

The main objective for which the Creator of the world, Allah, has fixed fasting for us is that we develop within ourselves what we usually understand as *taqwa*. This Arabic word denotes a concept which is usually translated as Godfearingness or righteousness. In the Holy Quran there are plenty of verses which explain what is *Taqwa*. For example, in the very beginning of Sura Al Baqarah we read:

“This is a perfect Book; there is no doubt in it; *it is* a guidance for the righteous

Who believe in the unseen and observe Prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them;

And who believe in that which has been revealed to thee, and that which was revealed before thee, and they have firm faith in what is *yet* to come.

It is they who follow the guidance of their Lord and it is they who shall prosper.” (2:3-6)

Hence what we can understand is that to successfully live one’s life it is incumbent upon each one among us to reflect in our life what has been described in these verses so that we may be properly guided and we are among those who have lived a life according to the Book of Allah. This is the task that a Muslim has to do throughout the whole year, throughout his life once he is a mature person. In the holy month of Ramadan Allah wants us to shrug off our negligence, our laziness, and to focus our attention more upon Him and what He says and for a whole month we have been asked to fast in order to develop within us *taqwa* which is the main aim of fasting. If in the other months of the year we allow ourselves to be negligent in our prayers or our duties as are expected of us, Allah imposes upon us another routine in the Holy month of Ramadan to reflect truly how we should live as a true Muslim who follows the Holy Quran as our book of guidance. So, we should all reflect upon how far we are doing our best in our life to be a truly practicing Muslim. Each one has to answer this question by himself or herself.

A simple answer about what is *taqwa* is as reported in Islamic Literature as follows:

“It has been stated that ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (*radiyallahu ‘anhu*) once asked Ubayy ibn Ka’b (*radiyallahu ‘anhu*) regarding Taqwa. Ubayy (*radiyallahu ‘anhu*) asked, “Have you not traversed on a thorny path?” When ‘Umar (*radiyallahu ‘anhu*) replied in the affirmative, Ubayy (*radiyallahu ‘anhu*) asked, “What do you do?” He replied, “I fold up my garment, and I [tread cautiously]. Ubayy (*radiyallahu ‘anhu*) said: “That is *Taqwa*.” (Tafsir ibn Kathir, Surah Al Baqarah, Verse: 2, vol. 1, pg. 255)

The thorny path is of course the path of life where there are many attractions that may distract us from the right path (*siratam mustaqim*) but it is our duty as good Muslims that we stick to the right path by being careful where we place our foot. If we are not careful, we will put our foot on thorns and they will harm us.

The following verse of the Holy Quran calls for deep reflection. Allah says:

ط يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا
إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

“O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may recognize one another. Verily, the most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-knowing, All-Aware.”

The more pious we are the dearer we will be to Allah. Therefore, it is important for us to reflect and do our best to be among those who develop *Taqwa* within themselves in the best possible way. May Allah help each one among us to understand well the objective of our life and to be sincere in its pursuit. Incha Allah. Ameen

Now I will share with you some extracts from the writings of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) about the subject of *taqwa* with the hope that we will better understand how is *taqwa* translated in our practical life. Incha Allah.

He said:

“God’s pleasure does not lie in somebody’s physique or this or that tribe; He always looks towards the *Taqwa* (righteousness and the quality of fearing God).

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَى

(That is, the most honourable in the sight of God is the one among you who is most God fearing).

It is quite false and meaningless to say that I am a Sayyed, a Mughal, a Pathan or a Sheikh. If somebody takes pride in his caste being a great one, he does something that is of no value. When a man has passed away from this world, all the castes become non-existent. God does not look to the castes nor it man can attain to salvation because he belongs to a ‘great family’. The Holy Prophet(saw), told Hazrat Fatima not to take pride in being the daughter of a Messenger of God.

God has nothing to do with the castes. The man attains to spiritual ranks because of his *Taqwa*. The castes and the tribes are just a matter of recognition. God has nothing to do with them. It is *Taqwa* that generates the love of God and again it is *Taqwa* that is the basis of the attainment of high ranks.

If somebody is a Sayyed and he becomes a Christian and abuses the Holy Prophet(saw), and insults the commandments of God, can it ever be said that since he is a descendant of the Holy Prophet(saw), he will attain to salvation and he will be made to enter the paradise?

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

In the sight of God, the true religion which grants salvation is Islam. [Malfoozat Vol. III, p. 343]

“It is necessary for our Jama’at to adopt righteousness in this time of disorder, wherein a gust of misguidance, ignorance and depravity is blowing from every direction. ... Observing the slightest loss in worldly terms, they abandon religious aspects and the rights of God Almighty. They are overtaken by their personal sentiments at the slightest incidents... , the hearts are void of faith and the practical state is not at all visible. This is the very reason God Almighty has raised me so that I may once again develop these aspects. ... God did not at all desire for this field to remain barren and for people to remain distant [from Him]. ... and for this very reason we preach that you may acquire a life of *Taqwa* (Godfeariness, righteousness).”

“Islam means to completely devote oneself to God Almighty and its essence is true and absolute obedience towards God. A Muslim is one, who devotes his entire being to God Almighty and desires to attain the pleasure of God Almighty without the desire of any

reward.... Furthermore, all of the virtues and good deeds performed by him, should be performed with a sense of pleasure and delight.”

“In the Holy Qur’an, as compared with other precepts there is a great emphasis and insistence upon *taqwa*, upon going through life stepping with care. The reason for this is that righteousness bestows the strength to resist all vice and urges progress towards all good. Righteousness is in all circumstances a charm that guarantees security and is a citadel for safeguarding against all harm. A man who practices *taqwa* saves himself thereby from pointless but dangerous disputes in which other people get involved and which lead them to destruction. On account of their hasty reactions and base suspicions they create dissension providing opportunities for the detractors to indulge in fault-finding” [Ayyam-us-Sulh, Ruhani Khazain, vol. 14, p. 342]

“Blessed is the one who adopts righteousness in a time of success and prosperity and most unfortunate is one who does not turn to righteousness after stumbling.” [Malfuzat, vol. I, p. 157]

“The spiritual beauty of man is to walk along all the finer ways of righteousness. They are the attractive features of spiritual beauty. It is obvious that to be mindful of the trusts of God Almighty, and to fulfil all the covenants of faith, and to employ all faculties and limbs both overt, like eyes and ears and hands and feet and others like them, and those that are covert, like the mind and other faculties and qualities, on their proper occasions and to restrain them from coming into action on improper occasions, and to be warned against the subtle attacks of vice and to be mindful of the rights of one’s fellow beings, is the way of perfecting one’s spiritual beauty. God Almighty has in the Holy Qur’an designated righteousness as a raiment. *Libas-ut-taqwa* is an expression of the Holy Qur’an. This is an indication that spiritual beauty and spiritual ornament are achieved through righteousness. Righteousness means that one must be mindful even of the smallest details of the Divine trusts and covenants and also of all the trusts and covenants of one’s fellow beings, as far as it may be possible. That is, one must try to fulfil, to the best of one’s ability, all the requirements in their minutest details. [Brahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Part V, Ruhani Khaza’in, vol. 21, pp. 209-210]

We will stop here for today. We hope and pray that Allah help each one among us to spend a really blessed month of Ramadan which is such that it is a great improvement on all other months of Ramadan that we have seen in our life up till now. Incha Allah. *Ameen!*