

FRIDAY SERMON

22nd March 2024

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Ten days of fasting have already gone by in this blessed month of Ramadan. We pray that Allah help each one among us to fast till the end of the month. You might recall the famous hadith which is related as follows by one companion (ra):

“The Messenger of Allah ﷺ addressed us on the last day of Sha’ban and said: “O people, there has come to you a great month, a blessed month, a month in which there is a night that is better than a thousand months. Allah has made fasting obligatory and spending its nights in prayer a voluntary act. Whoever draws close (to Allah) during it by doing a good deed will be like one who did an obligatory deed in any other month, and the one who does an obligatory deed in it will be like one who did seventy obligatory deeds in any other month. It is the month of patience, and the reward of patience is Paradise. It is the month of helping others. It is a month in which the believer’s provision is increased. Whoever gives a fasting person food with which to break his fast will have his sins forgiven, and he will be ransomed from the Fire. He will have a reward like the fasting persons’ without it detracting from his reward in the slightest.”

The companions said: “Not all of us can find something to give to the fasting person with which to break his fast. He said: “Allah will give this reward to the one who gives a fasting person a date or a drink of water or a sip of milk. *It is a month, the beginning of which is mercy, the middle of which is forgiveness, and the end of which is ransom from the Fire.* Allah will forgive the one who reduces the burden for his slave, and He will ransom him from the Fire. So do a lot of four good deeds during it, two with which you will please your Lord and two with which you cannot do without. As for the two good deeds with which you will please your Lord, they are bearing witness that there is no god except Allah and seeking His forgiveness. As for those which you cannot do without, they are asking Allah for Paradise and seeking refuge with Him from Hell. Whoever feeds a fasting person until he is full,

Allah will give him to drink from my well, a drink after which he will not thirst again until he enters Paradise.”

This is a weak hadith according to the hadith experts because of some defects in the chain of narration. However, we do not find any other place where the merits of the blessed month of Ramadan are so beautifully expressed. Anyhow, whatever is said in it is good motivation enough to fast, to pray, to share the joys of Ramadan, the blessed month. May Allah help each one among us to fully enjoy the twenty days left to the best of our abilities.

Let me read you some more hadith:

1. *When any of you is observing fasting, he should neither indulge in obscene language, nor should he raise the voice, and if anyone reviles him or tries to quarrel with him, he should say: ‘I am observing the fast.’” [Bukhari & Muslim]*
2. *“If one doesn’t leave lies and false conduct, Allah does not need that he should abstain from his food and drink.” [Bukhari]*

So, to get the reward of the fast, one must abstain from all sorts of vices, such as lying, cheating, backbiting and using obscene language. That will make him attain *taqwa* (fear of Allah) in life, which is the main objective of fasting: “that you may become righteous” as we said last week.

The Prophet (saw) also said that he who observes fasting during the month of Ramadan, with faith, while seeking its reward from Allah, will have his past sins forgiven; and he who observes *Qiyamul Layl* (*tarawih/tahajjud*) prayer during the month of Ramadhan with faith while seeking its reward from Allah, will have his past sins forgiven. [Bukhari & Muslim]

Hence, we should keep these *hadith* in mind because they will keep us motivated and make us strive to do better and not just remaining without food and drink.

Now, we will read some more from the writings of the Promised Messiah (as) where he advises us what to do and what to avoid in order to cultivate righteousness within us. He said:

“In the Holy Qur’an more emphasis has been laid on virtue and righteousness than on any other commandment. 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 righteous person can avoid many vain and harmful contentions that often lead other people to ruin. They sow the seed of dissension among the people through their hasty actions and suspicions and lay themselves open to objection.” [Ayyam-us-Sulh, Ruhani Khaza’in, vol. 14, p. 342]

“There are many elements in righteousness. It is righteousness to avoid pride and self-esteem and to refrain from unlawful acquisition and ill manners. A person who displays courtesy and good manners converts his enemies into friends. [Malfuzaat, vol. I, p. 81]

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. [Malfuzaat, 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]

True righteousness and ignorance cannot subsist together. True righteousness is accompanied by a light, as God the Glorious, has said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

O ye who believe! if you fear Allah, He will grant you a distinction and will remove your evils from you and will forgive you; and Allah is *Lord* of great bounty.(8:30)

That is, O ye who believe, if you remain steadfast in righteousness and hold fast to it for the sake of Allah, with firmness and perseverance, He will single you out from

among your detractors with marked distinction. That is, you shall be blessed with a light which will accompany you wherever you go.

That is to say, that that light would illumine all their actions and words and faculties and senses. Their intellect would be illumined and there would be light in all that they utter. There would be light in their eyes and in their ears and in their tongues and in their speech and in all their movements. The ways along which they walk would be lit up. All their ways, the ways of their faculties and their senses will be filled with light, and they will walk altogether in light. **[A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 5, pp. 177-178]**

“There is a great distinction between the acquisition of worldly knowledge and knowledge of the Holy Qur'an. **Righteousness** is not needed for the study of grammar, physics, philosophy, astronomy, medicine, etc. It is not necessary that a student of these subjects should observe *Salat* and the fast and should be mindful of Divine commandments and prohibitions and should subordinate his every action and word to Divine directions. Indeed, it often happens that the seekers of such knowledge become atheistic and are involved in every kind of vice.

Today the world presents a remarkable spectacle. Though the people of Europe and America acquire high proficiency in worldly arts and sciences and daily make new inventions, their moral and spiritual condition is deplorable. We cannot even mention some of the scenes that are witnessed in the parks of London and the hotels of Paris and are published in the daily press. On the other hand, righteousness is an essential condition for heavenly learning and for acquiring knowledge of the mysteries of the Holy Qur'an. For this purpose, sincere repentance is needed. For the door of Qur'anic knowledge is not opened until a seeker of it carries the burden of Divine commands with perfect humility and meekness and turns to Him humbly, trembling before His glory and His might. Without these he cannot obtain from the Holy Qur'an the means of fostering those qualities and faculties which generate delight and comfort for the soul. The Holy Qur'an is the Book of God and its knowledge is in the hand of God; thus, righteousness is the ladder for the acquisition of such knowledge. Then how can it be possible that the faithless wicked who are evil-minded and are held prisoner by their earthly passions should achieve such knowledge? A Muslim who does not purify his soul is not bestowed knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, however high may be his proficiency in grammar and literary subjects, and however much he might enjoy the esteem of the worldly.

At this time the attention of the world is centered upon worldly knowledge and the light of Western learning continues to astonish mankind with new inventions and manufactures. Unfortunately, the Muslims also have chosen to follow the West for the purpose of fostering their own welfare and they take pride in copying Europe and America. That is the attitude of the Muslims who follow the new light. Those who are known as old fashioned Muslims and deem themselves the guardians of the faith are caught in the niceties of points of grammar and in determining the correct manner of the pronunciation of *Dallin*. They pay no attention to the true meaning of the Holy Qur'an, nor are they capable of doing so as they do not address themselves to the purification of their souls.” **[Malfuzat, vol. I, pp. 425-427]**

Incha Allah next week we will read more of these extracts. May Allah help each one among us to progress in righteousness without neglecting our lot in this world. *Ameen*.