

Tuesday, 25 December 2007

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا  
وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.  
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

Praise be to **اللَّهِ**.

We praise him and ask him for help and forgiveness. We ask him for protection from the evilness in ourselves and from our bad deeds. Whomever God guides to the truth no one will lead astray, and whomever He leads astray, no one will ever guide.

I testify that there is no God but **اللَّهِ** to whom there is no partner  
and I testify that Muhammad **ﷺ** is his servant and messenger

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ، وَالتَّنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ،  
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ، إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ (الحشر ، 18)

*"O you who believe, fear Allah, and let every soul look to what (provision) it has sent forth for tomorrow. And fear Allah, for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that you do" (S59, A18)*



The topic for today's Khutbah is a difficult one. It tries to encompass various aspects of our lives as Muslims living in a society that is governed by choice. The topic for today is to understand to some extent the concept of CHOICE in Islam.

I have listened to a lecture by Husain Pasha given to me on a CD. It gave me the idea for this khutbah, which, to a large part, is prepared from his lecture. I had to listen to this lecture probably over 20 times before starting to grasp the ideas that Husain Pasha wanted to pass on, and I hope that I am not misrepresenting him in what I have to say. The topic is far too long for one khutbah, especially in winter. I will ISA spread it over two or more khutbahs, and my next khutbah is in two week's time on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December.

Choice, is there a problem? Well, when we look at most of us in this mosque, one may ask, how many of us was given the choice of being a Muslim? How many of us had a choice in accepting or rejecting this blessing?

As good Muslims, ISA, we should all be aware of the benefits that we can enjoy by being a Muslim, in this life and in the hereafter. Have we ever considered this important question? Have we ever considered this crucial fact in our existence?

We had no choice in the matter. So how should I feel, and how should we all feel about this fact? We need to address this issue, the issue of choice, very seriously.

One may wish to consider four potential groups:

1. There are those who have been given this chance, the blessing of Islam, and are Muslims not by choice.
2. There are those who have not been given this chance, and are not Muslims, equally not by choice.
3. There also those who have been given this chance, and have embraced Islam by choice.
4. And finally there are those who had the chance of being guided into Islam, and have rejected this chance by choice.

These four groups of people are not all the same. Those who are Muslims by choice and those who are Muslims not by choice may not share the same views on how Islam should be projected to those around us. Equally so, those who rejected Islam by choice and those who have not been born into Islam will have different outlooks to what Islam has to say and offer.

An intriguing scenario, which is common place, is that of a Muslim who has been guided into Islam NOT BY CHOICE and that is most of us here, trying to convey the message of Islam to someone who does not want to be a Muslim BY CHOICE and that is probably most of them out there.

Do we now start to realise the importance of the concept of choice. It is no longer Islam that is the only focus of the argument, but it is the concept that there is *choice*.

We therefore need to understand this concept in Islam. I am absolutely sure that I will not give this topic its due, but ISA I will try my best.

The first issue that needs addressing is that most of us had little choice in being Muslims. Sometimes we do not realise how lucky we are that we were born Muslims, and we had no choice in the matter. One never realises the blessing that has been showered upon us, without us having to say yes or no. Allah in His wisdom has guided us, and not for anything good or otherwise that we have said or done. It is truly a magnificent blessing that most of us are sitting here as Muslims and we had no choice in the matter. We may never fully understand this blessing until we ask someone who entered Islam by choice and listen to them telling us of the transformation that has taken place in their life. We do therefore become complacent or even arrogant because we are Muslims, never realising how we came to be Muslims in the first place.

Complacent may mean that you may think that because you are a Muslim, you somehow has been favoured or even has been guaranteed your place in the hereafter. While arrogant may mean that because you are a Muslim, somehow, by implication those who are not Muslims are not deserving of Allah's mercy.

I need to remind myself that it is only by the mercy of Allah that I am a Muslim, and indeed it is by the mercy of Allah that we are all Muslims. We need to remember that, and we need to be thankful and humble about it. We have seen some Muslims behave as if Islam is so clear, how come others are unable to see the truth, as if we were clever enough to see the truth and decided to follow it ourselves. Have we not seen some Muslims behave as if they are the only ones deserving of the mercy of Allah. Have we not seen some Muslims behave as if Islam is a closed club. If you belong to it, you have special privileges, and if not, you are on the outside.

No, Islam is not like that. During periods of conflict, people's perceptions tend to change. But Islam is not like what President Bush has said when it came to conflict: if you are not with us you are against us. No, Islam is alien to the concept of you are either with us, or by implication against us. Islam is knowledge. Islam is mercy. Islam is guidance. Islam is for the whole of humanity. But most important, Islam is choice.

Is that true?

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ

***"Let there be no compulsion in religion, truth stands out clear from error" (S2, A256)***

These are the words of Allah in our Holy Quran. These are the words of the aya 256 in surat-Al-Baqara. This aya comes immediately after the aya of "Al-Kursi" of Allah, so we do not have to go far looking for it. Can Islam be any clearer about the issue of compulsion? We read this aya many times, but somehow we, and that includes myself, do not grasp its full meaning. Husain Pasha argues that it is against humanity

that people are not given a choice, and in fact he argues that it is against Allah's commands that people are not given the choice:

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ ﴿٨﴾ وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ ﴿٩﴾ وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ

**"Have We not given him two eyes, And a tongue and two lips, And pointed out to him the two conspicuous ways?" (S90, A8-10)**

Allah<sup>(SWT)</sup> is telling us without any shadow of doubt that mankind has been shown two conspicuous ways, that of the truth and that of error. Why? If Allah<sup>(SWT)</sup> wanted us to always be on the straight and narrow, why are we told in the Holy Quran that we have been shown two distinct ways, and that there is no compulsion. It is because we have to make a choice. It is part of being human that we have a choice. When any person forces any one into one or other path, he or she is denying a God given right to make a choice. By denying choice, we deny humanity, and by denying choice, we go against the commands of Allah<sup>(SWT)</sup>.

Can it be any clearer than that? In fact, it is even clearer still. Where there is no choice, there is no Islam. Where there is no freedom of choice there is no Islam, and Husain Pasha argues, where there is no freedom, there is no Islam, period!

Is that clear?

For this khutbah, we will deal with us, the Muslims, and ISA, in next khutbah we will deal with the society around us.

We go back to the issue of us being born into Islam, and the fact that Allah in His wisdom has guided us into Islam. So how special is that?

Muslims sometimes are not aware of how blessed they are for being Muslims. They sometime assume that it is a privilege and that they are indeed deserving of this privilege, especially when they are actively working for the message of Islam. Be careful brothers and sisters. Do not fall into this trap, and we all know that shaitan is out there laying traps for us, one after the other. Remember what the Quran has to say about being a believer:

وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

**"And the majority of people will not believe, however strongly you desire" (S13, A103)**

Allah<sup>(SWT)</sup> in this aya is telling the Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> that the majority of people will not believe in Allah no matter how much care and how strong is your desire for them to be believers. We should also not fall into the trap of thinking that the Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> loves us and it is for that that we are believers, and it is for that that we will be saved on the day of judgement. No, this aya is very clear. The majority of people will not be

believers no matter how strongly “you” desire. We all probably have heard this following aya:

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ

**"Surely you (Muhammad) cannot guide whom you love but it is Allah who guides those whom He will" (S28, A56)**

Many Muslims tend to get somewhat frustrated by their lack of progress in not promoting the message of Islam to others. In these two ayas, Allah<sup>(SWT)</sup> is reminding the Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> that the majority of people will not believe, and those who believe do so by the blessing of Allah. A very powerful and sobering message.

This message is not just for the Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup>, but it is for us. When Allah<sup>(SWT)</sup> testifies that the majority will be non-believers, we need to ask ourselves, what chance did we have to be among the believers in the first place? Do we ever contemplate the fact that we could have been born to a non-Muslim community. We could have been born in a Muslim community that is far removed from Islam. When it is made clear in the Quran that the majority will not believe, how lucky are we to be among those who do believe? How lucky are we to part of this minority?

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله لي ولكم

2<sup>nd</sup> Khutbah:

الحمد لله ثم الحمد لله. الحمد لله نستعينه ونستغفره ، ونعوذ بالله من شرور  
أنفوسنا وسيات أعمالنا . أما بعد :

وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

**"And the majority of people will not believe, however strongly you desire" (S13, A103)**

Now that we have realised how lucky we are for being among the believing minority, the next question we need to ask ourselves is how grateful are we for being believers. When we take a look around us, we see that most of us have been guided into Islam not by choice, but by birth. A very small minority have been blessed enough to find their way into Islam. We sometimes feel a sense of arrogance for being Muslims. How many of us have heard these words uttered by defiant Muslims: in a few years the West will be under Shari'a law, and Islam will rule. You get the sense that Islam

will be imposed on the western democracies. You get the message that there is no choice in the matter, and you may even be misguided to think we the Muslims are the chosen lucky ones to be on this side of the wall.

Sometimes we get engrossed in this idea that we need to spread the message, and we need to guide the misguided, and so on. Yes, it is true that we are entrusted to pass on this beautiful message. But be careful brothers and sisters not to fall into the next trap. Ask yourself this question: What good are my efforts to pass this beautiful message onto others to save themselves if I am not saved in the process? You may ask Allah, well I am doing it for you, I am a Muslim for you:

قُلْ لَا تَمُنُّوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُم بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ

***"Say, claim not your Islam as a favour unto me, but it is Allah that has conferred a favour upon you that He has guided you to the faith" (S49, A17)***

What good is it for me if all those around are saved but I am not. Sometimes in thinking about spreading the message of Islam, we tend to forget ourselves, and that is very dangerous. We may think that as long as I am active in spreading the message, I will be forgiven for my sins. Fulfilling my duty of guiding people into Islam is more important than me fulfilling my basic duties in Islam. What good will it do for me if everyone else is saved in the process, but not me?

We have recently witnessed acts committed by Muslims in the name of Islam. When we look closely at what has been committed, one should ask, has this person saved himself or herself by their actions. This is a very sobering thought.

Yes, I, as well as all of you here, would dearly love to promote the message of Islam. Yes, we would dearly love to see as many people enjoy the benefits that we enjoy by being a Muslim. However, if I cannot even save myself, what good have I achieved. How many of us here can declare with certainty, 100%, that he or she is saved. In fact, let us be generous, let us give 50/50 odds that you are saved. Anyone here is happy to give 50/50 odds that they are saved from the fire of hell. I think, probably we would all be happy with a 10% odds. If each and every one of us now would like to give themselves odds of being saved, how much will it be? It is a scary thought. Yet, even when we ourselves have not been saved, we endeavour to save those around us.

When it comes to this point, it is as if we put our heads in the sand and hope for the best. Remember the aya:

وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

***"And the majority of people will not believe, however strongly you desire" (S13, A103)***

Remember brothers and sisters, when it comes to the day of judgement, no one can act on any one else's behalf on that day:

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

*"And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another" (S39, A7)*