

Friday 23rd September 2005

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.

All Praise be to **الله**.

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

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

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيداً ☆ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ
لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ، وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزاً عَظِيماً ﴾ (الأحزاب، 1-70)

"O you who believe, fear Allah, and say what is the truth. That He may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive your sins. He that obeys Allah and His messenger has attained the great victory" (S33, A70-1)



Brothers and sisters, ASA.

The topic for today's khutbah is **Patience and Forgiveness**

In the last khutbah, we talked about some aspects of the diseases of the heart. We hopefully should remember the description the Prophet^(SAAWS) gave to the heart of a person who is "makhmoum al-qalb"; *it is a heart that is clean and that is fearful of Allah, a heart that has no oppression and no aggression, and a heart that is free of bitterness and free of envy and jealousy.*

What a wonderful heart to have. However, this clean and wonderful heart does not come easy. It does not come without the will to have such a heart and it does not come without a lot of practice. Yes, we know that some extra-ordinary people find it somewhat easy to achieve such a heart, but for most of us, we need to work very, very hard at it. This is why the Prophet^(SAAWS) gave example after example of what Muslims need to do and how they should do it, in order for them to gradually move towards that goal. The goal of being "makhmoum al-qalb".

Of the many examples, two of the more important characteristics that we need to encourage and to develop are **patience and forgiveness**. The Holy month of Ramadan is again at our doorsteps. It is the month of strengthening our acts of worship to Allah^(SWT). It is the month where we can attempt redemption for our sins and ask for forgiveness from Allah. It is the month where we may be able to achieve the ultimate prize of being saved from the fire of hell and of being accepted among those who have gained the pleasure of Allah. It is also the month where we can re-discipline our hearts and treat it from the ailments we spoke about in last khutbah.

We sometimes try to achieve too much during Ramadan, and as a result, we feel that we have accomplished little. For this reason, I would like to make a sincere suggestion. In this forthcoming Ramadan, I would urge all brothers and sisters to concentrate on developing two main characteristics. We need to concentrate on developing and strengthening our abilities **to be patient** and **to be forgiving**. We need to encourage patience and forgiveness.

It is generally agreed that ones ability to tolerate others and be patient with them is an indication of his level of self confidence. A person who has self confidence is that person who is able to tolerate the misgivings of others, be patient with them, and is able to excuse and forgive them.

In the face of intimidation, Muslims vary widely in their response. Some are easily intimidated and angered and respond foolishly and aggressively. While some, on the other hand, keep their calm and kind nature despite the gravity of the intimidation.

Let us look at the response of Hud to his people when they insulted him:

﴿ وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۖ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ
مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

"And to the people of 'Ad, (We sent) one of their (own) brothers, Hud,: He said: O my people! worship Allah! you have no other god but Him. Will you not fear (Allah)?" (S7, A65)

They replied:

﴿ قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرُّكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ
مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

"The leaders of the Unbelievers among his people said: "We see that you are an imbecile!" and "We think that you are a liar!" (S7, A66)

How would one of us react if someone comes up to him or her and says; you are an imbecile and a liar? Do we stay calm or do we think this is my chance to get even? Let us hear how Hud, the messenger of Allah responds:

﴿ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي سَفَاهَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
﴿٦٧﴾ أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٦٨﴾

"He said: O my people! I am no imbecile, but (I am) a messenger from the Lord and Cherisher of the worlds! I but fulfil towards you the duties of my Lord's mission: I am to you a sincere and trustworthy adviser" (S7, A67-8)

What a wonderful response. In the face of intimidation and humiliation, Hud shows no anger, he shows no aggression, but equally so, he shows NO weakness. His confidence in his message, the message to worship Allah, and no one else, comes through. Hud was aware that, what good is his message if he himself does not show that he has benefited from it. What good is his message to worship Allah if he presents himself as an angry and frustrated person, or as a weak and feeble person? How can you convince others of the beauty of the message if that beauty has not touched you?

This is the message for us Muslims. How can we convince others around us of the beauty of the message of Islam if we ourselves are not willing to abide by it, and seemingly are not benefiting from it.

The Prophet^(SAAWS) was very particular about teaching the sahabah the lessons of patience and forgiveness. In the sirah of the Prophet^(SAAWS) we come across the following incident: An Arabian came to the Prophet^(SAAWS) and asked to be given something. The Prophet^(SAAWS) gave him what he asked for and asked him; have I been good to you? The man replied harshly, "no, and you were not good enough". The companions got angry and raced to teach him a lesson in manners. The Prophet^(SAAWS) asked them to stay calm. He went into his house and asked the man in, and gave him more. He then asked, have I been good to you? The Arabian then replied "yes, may Allah reward you". The Prophet^(SAAWS) reminded the man of what he had said in front of the companions, and that they still have anger in their hearts. So he asked him to return to them, and tell them what you told me now. The following day, the Prophet^(SAAWS) reminded the companions of what this man said initially, and what he ultimately said.

Then the Prophet^(SAAWS) gave his lesson, he said; *"The example of me and this person is like a man who has a camel that strayed. The people, trying to help, ran after the camel, but all that they achieved was to make the camel run further away. The owner of the camel said, leave my camel to me, for I am much kinder to it, and know it more than you. He took some grass in his hands and gently went towards the camel. The camel gently came back to him, knelt down and he was able to ride it again. The Prophet^(SAAWS) said if I let you get to this man after what he said first, you may have killed him, and he may have entered the fire of hell by what he said and by your reaction"*.

This is the example of the Prophet^(SAAWS) teaching his companions the message of Islam. The clear message is to lead people into the light of Islam through patience, through forgiveness and through tolerance. It is not our aim as Muslims to be so intolerant that we drive non-Muslims away, and in doing so, we lead them away from heaven.

In this example, the Prophet^(SAAWS) is highlighting to us a number of issues. Firstly, even though the Arabian was wrong in his response, the Prophet^(SAAWS) was aware that this was that person's personality. It was his response to whoever would have asked that question. The response was not personal against the Prophet^(SAAWS), but it simply reflected the harsh nature of this Arabian man. There was nothing personal in his response, and the Prophet^(SAAWS) took no personal offence, as the sahabah did.

On the contrary, the Prophet^(SAAWS) identified the defect in that person's behaviour and treated that defect. In doing so, he also managed the response of the sahabah and calmed them down, and finally, the following day, he made the sahabah contemplate their actions the previous day and learn the example of what patience and forgiveness can achieve. He also warned them about the detriment of an irresponsible reaction waged in anger. This is the example of our teacher, the Prophet^(SAAWS). This is the example set for us.

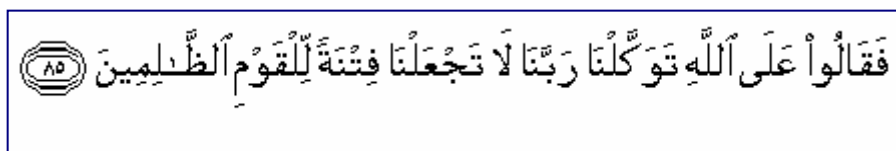
As ordinary people, we come across routine daily events that will test our patience and our resolve to the limit. These daily events are enacted by both Muslims and non-Muslims. I would like to highlight an important issue regarding our dealings with non-Muslims. If we truly believe that as Muslims we have a message to pass across, we now know very well that we cannot simply pass the message of Islam by just

talking about it. No matter how well we can talk about Islam, it is our conduct as Muslims that will determine whether those non-Muslims will be tempted into Islam or not.

What would happen if our actions did in fact turn people away from Islam. Brothers and sisters, we need to be very clear about this point. You need to ask yourself, as a Muslim, have I done something today that convinced a non-Muslim that Islam is not the religion for him. Have I given Islam the wrong image. Just imagine this scenario. Have I driven people away from Islam by my actions.

The Prophet^(SAAWS) faced hardship after hardship to deliver the message of Islam. The sahabah were killed in their hundreds if not their thousands in their attempt to preserve and pass on the message of Islam. They did that to our benefit. Imagine that after all these sacrifices, we portray, through our behaviour, that this religion is not good enough for those around us now. By our actions we are stopping the message of Islam. The message that we have been entrusted to pass on. This thought is unimaginable.

Listen to these words from the Quran:



"They said: In Allah do we put our trust. Our Lord! make us not a trial for those who are oppressive (and wrong doers)" (S10, A85)

These are the words of the followers of Moussa^(AS) asking Allah not to make them a trial for the non-believers. They did not want the disbelievers to judge the religion of Allah through them, and when the day of judgement comes, the disbelievers would say we did not follow Islam because we saw nothing special about the Muslims. Imagine if on the day of judgement a non-believer says the Muslims I came across were aggressive, they were full of hatred and anger, they were non-forgiving and so on. Imagine if the disbeliever is using us as an excuse for not believing in Allah. What a calamity for us.

We need to remember this verse, and pray Allah that we do not become the reason that deters people around us from accepting Islam, whether that was from something we say or something we do, or from something we did not say or something we did not do.

You see, back in the Islamic countries, we did not have this burden on our shoulders, because mostly everyone around us was a Muslim. But here, the situation is different. Suddenly, praying, fasting and giving charity is not enough. Being a practicing Muslim is no longer enough. Whether we like or not, in this society we are all entrusted in the process of Da'wa. Therefore, one of the most important issues for us, the ordinary Muslim, is for us to enact Islam according to the example of the Prophet^(SAAWS). This is how we participate in the Da'wa. This is where our behaviour is so important. This is why we continue to speak about the diseases of the heart, and

this is why we continue to speak about the virtues of patience and forgiveness. In addition to all the benefits one can achieve through patience and forgiveness, one may achieve the ultimate prize and that is to guide a non-Muslim into Islam through his or her conduct.

Let us ask ourselves which is more valuable to us. Let us ask ourselves to solve this equation, and every one here will need to solve this for themselves. What would you be prepared to give up to guide a non-believer into Islam. What value would you put on the knowledge that a person out there may accept Islam through you.

Back to patience and forgiveness. In a khutbah, the Prophet^(SAAWS) said: The children of Adam are of different levels. Of their best are those who are slow to anger and quick to forgive. Others are quick to anger and quick to forgive, while some are slow to anger and slow to forgive and these balance out. However, of their worst are those who are quick to anger and slow to forgive.

Here, the Prophet^(SAAWS) is again reminding us that people are not alike, and we differ in the way we react. However, in doing so, the Prophet^(SAAWS) is also telling us what is considered as the best, as the average and as the worst, and guiding us to better ourselves.

The Prophet^(SAAWS) continued to say that anger is like a red hot charcoal in ones heart, for you see the redness in their eyes and their veins. If one should feel that way, the Prophet^(SAAWS) said, "stay put and stay seated". Another clear message about controlling our anger and being patient.

The Prophet^(SAAWS) asked the companions: who among you do you consider invincible. They replied it is he who cannot be overcome by other men. The Prophet^(SAAWS) said it is he who is not overcome by anger. (narrated by Muslim)

A man came to the Prophet^(SAAWS) and asked to be given advice but not to make it too much so as he does not forget. The Prophet^(SAAWS) said: Do not get angry. (Narrated by Malek)

When Islam came to the people of the Jahilia, there were two serious problems that needed addressing. These two serious problems were the fact that the people of the Jahilia did not see value in knowledge and did not see value in patience. These were two significant problems that Islam came to solve, ignorance and anger. Imagine the sort of society that is based on ignorance and anger, and then imagine the sort of society that is based on knowledge and patience.

This is what Islam makes us strive for. Islam is enlightenment. It is knowledge, and there is tremendous comfort for us in knowledge. Then Islam teaches us patience and there is again tremendous comfort for us and for those around us in patience.

When anger gets the better of us, some of us find great difficulty in holding back our tongues. We tend to let our tongues loose, and a familiar expression is "to let rip". The Prophet^(SAAWS) said: The believer does not backstab, does not curse others, is not indecent and is not vulgar. (Narrated by Al-Tirmizi)

قال رسول الله ﷺ ☆ ليس المؤمنُ بطعان ولا لعان ولا فحش ولا بذيء ☆ (الترمذی)

In a fit of anger, some may inadvertently curse others. Some, however may curse others even without anger. The Prophet was asked pray Allah to punish the disbelievers and curse them. The Prophet^(SAAWS) replied, I was sent as a mercy and not as a curse.

قيل لرسول الله ﷺ: ادع على المشركين والعنهم. قال ﷺ: إنما بعثت رحمة ولم أبعث لعناً ﷺ (مسلم)

The status of the Muslim in the eyes of Allah is reflected by his or her ability to control one-self, to control ones anger, to control ones words, to overlook the mistakes of others and to forgive them. It is through patience and forgiveness that we elevate our status in the eyes of Allah.

Listen to what the Prophet^(SAAWS) say about ones curse. The Prophet^(SAAWS) said, when a person curses someone, this curse ascends the heavens, but the doors of heaven are closed to it. It descends to earth, but the doors of the earth close to it. When this curse finds no opening, it goes towards its intended victim. If the person was deserving of the curse, it sticks to him, but if not, the curse returns to the person who said it.

Islam encourages us to control our anger. Islam also encourages us to control our tongues when we are in anger. Islam forbids us to indulge in obscenities.

عن عبادة بن الصامت: قال رسول الله ﷺ: ألا أنبئكم بما يُشرف الله به البنيان ويرفع الدرجات؟ قالوا: نعم يا رسول الله. قال: تحلم على من جهل عليك، وتغفو عن ظلمك، وتعطي من حرمك، وتصل من قطعك ﷺ الطبراني

The Prophet^(SAAWS) asked the sahabah, shall I tell you what would elevate your status by Allah, they replied: yes. He said, be patient with he who wronged you, and forgive he who has agressed you, and give to he who has denied you and approach he who has abandoned you" (Narrated by Al-Tabarani)

Again, a clear message of patience and forgiveness.

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله لي ولكم

2nd Khutbah:

الحمد لله ثم الحمد لله. الحمد لله نستعينه ونستغفره، ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا وسيئات أعمالنا. أما بعد:

Finally we end with verses from the Holy Quran:

﴿ وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ
 أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ
 الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

"And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord; and a Garden, the extensiveness of which is (as) the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who fear Allah and guard (against evil). Those who spend (of that which Allah hath given them) in ease and in adversity, those who control their anger, and those who are forgiving toward mankind. And Allah loves those who do good (to others)" (S3, A133-4)

This ayas again give a clear message of the status of those who practice patience and forgiveness. It is for them that the promise of the Garden of Paradise has been given, for those who practice patience and forgiveness.

وَلَا يَأْتِلِ أَوْلُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنكُم وَالسَّعَةِ أَن يُؤْتُوا أُولَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ
 وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَن يَغْفِرَ
 اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

"And let not those of you who possess grace and abundance swear against giving to the near of kin and the poor and those who have fled in Allah's way, and they should pardon and overlook. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (S24, A22)

This aya was revealed in response to Abu Bakr when he decided he will withdraw his benefit from one of his poor relation because of what this person said of Aisha^(RAA). The verse clearly asks Muslims to forgive and overlook. Abu Bakr responded by saying: I love Allah to forgive me, and he forgave his relative.

As we finish, let us take a final look at these two characteristics, patience and forgiveness. In the ayas and hadeeth mentioned, the two characteristics go hand in hand. Why should this be the case? To me, the message is that without patience it is difficult to be forgiving. In anger, there is little forgiveness. So, brothers and sisters, if we want Allah to forgive us, we need to forgive others. If we want to forgive others we need to control our anger and we need to be patient with others.

Let us, ISA, develop our ability to be patient with others, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Ramadan is getting nearer and nearer, and there is no better time to develop the virtue of patience than in Ramadan, as we test ourselves against hunger and thirst. If we decide that we want to develop one characteristic this Ramadan let it be patience.