

21st September 2007

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

All Praise be to **اللَّهِ**.

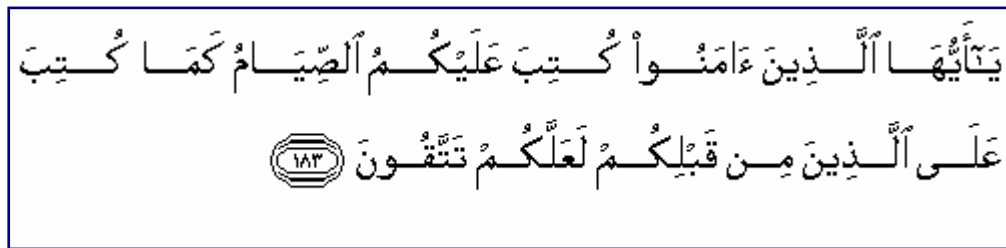
We praise him and ask him for help and forgiveness. We ask him for protection from the evilness in ourselves and from our own bad deeds. Whom-so-ever God guides to the truth no one will lead astray, and whom-so-ever He leads astray, no one will ever guide.

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

﴿يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا .
إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ . إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴾ (الحجرات، 13)

"O mankind. We created you from a single pair of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you many know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. And Allah has all knowledge and is fully acquainted with all matters"
(S 49, A 13)

Brothers and sisters, ASA.



“O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed to you as it has been prescribed to those before you, that you may achieve Taqua” (S2, 183)

The topic for today’s khutbah is a somewhat difficult one to put into words, but it is an important topic to highlight especially in Ramadan. The topic deals with a general concept in life that relates probably to most that we do and this includes how we look at our practice of Islam. The month of Ramadan is an ideal opportunity to put this issue forward, and ISA after Ramadan, we can discuss this in the study circle. This issue relates to what we consider in life as an **aim**, or an **end** and what we consider in life as a **means**. In Arabic, the terms are “Ghaya”, which is an aim, and “Wasseela” which is the means to achieve the aim.

We all know that the month of Ramadan is a series of progressive events. We are still within the first ten days of Ramadan, the days of Mercy. We then, ISA, progress into the second ten days, the days of “maghfirah”, and if Allah(SWT) gives us the opportunity, we progress into the last ten days, when we may, by the blessing of Allah, gain our salvation from punishment and our reward of paradise, “Ameen”. There seems to be a natural progress in this month. It is as if Allah is telling us that in this month, achieving our aim of “Taqua” is not going to happen on the first day, but the whole month is the “means” to do so.

The month has been divided for us to help us gradually ease ourselves from one level of worship into another. Most of us are just getting into the habit of carrying on with our routine daily work while at the same time getting into the spirit of Ramadan. Even by now, the full spirit of Ramadan has yet to grip us. One can see that even in “taraweeh” there is still some anger and frustration as to what has happened with the Quran recitation. Rather than standing in the hands of Allah(SWT), and getting deeply into what the Quran has to say, I started to sneak a glimpse to see if the “qari” is reading from the book or reciting by heart. I was very annoyed with myself. I felt that by doing so, I have already lost the focus of this month. I forgot that the aim of the month was to achieve “Taqua” and the “taraweeh” prayers are only one of the **means** to do so. To me, the “taraweeh” prayers took on the mantle of an **aim**, and by doing so, I overlooked my aim of “Taqua”. This is just but one issue. When I started looking at my daily routine, I started questioning myself, am I using this holy month to achieve “Taqua”, or am I using it simply to fast, to pray, to go to “Iftari” parties or what?

If I believe that Ramadan is the month of mercy, forgiveness, salvation and gaining paradise, the question that kept on creeping up was: Do I really gain this mercy, this forgiveness and this salvation simply by fasting and doing “taraweeh”? Does Islam tell us that paradise is really so easy? We all know that even our children are able to fast, and some of them are with us in the evenings praying. They are probably fitter and stronger than ourselves. So, I ask myself again, is paradise so easy that fasting for a number of days, doing extra “nawafel” prayers and reading the Quran is all that is needed.

Traditionally we are used to calling Ramadan the month of fasting. So, is Ramadan only to do with fasting? It seems such a straight forward question, but it gets us to the heart of Islam.

Is fasting an end in itself, or is it a means?

Unfortunately, we may have misrepresented what Ramadan is about by calling it the month of fasting. When asked to explain Ramadan, we instinctively say we stop eating from sunrise to sunset. If we ask our little children, what do you want to achieve this Ramadan, if we ask them what is your aim, they will say; it is to fast. Our children believe that by fasting they have achieved the aim of Ramadan. Unfortunately, many of us older Muslims believe that this is also the case. We believe that fasting is an aim in itself.

Many Muslims have been indoctrinated in this principle: The aim of the Muslim is to fast, to pray, to read the Quran and so on. We are indoctrinated that by achieving these aims Allah(SWT) will forgive our past sins and will wipe the slate clean. This is when I realized that we have **mixed up our aims and our means all together.** We have not progressed with our aims. We are still setting for ourselves aims that we have set for our children.

Again, if we ask the younger children what are your aims in Ramadan, they will probably say fasting. If we ask the slightly older children the same question, they will probably say fasting and they may add reading some Quran. If we ask the more older children the same question, they may even add “taraweeh”. So we see a clear progression in the aims set for Ramadan by the growing child. Now for the crunch question, if we ask the adults, what is your aim in Ramadan, what will we say? If the answer is still the same, then we are in trouble. Do you see where we are getting to? Let us read the ayah again:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ
عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٣﴾

“O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed to you as it has been prescribed to those before you, that you may achieve Taqua” (S2, 183)

Does this ayah make us think again about fasting. Fasting is not an aim but a means. Taraweeh is not an aim, but it is a means as well. These are all very important means that may, ISA, lead us to our ultimate aim, and that is “Taqua”. This is why it probably makes more sense to call Ramadan the month of “Taqua” and not the month of “fasting”. Do Muslims need to be reminded that Ramadan is the month of fasting. Absolutely not. Do Muslims need to be reminded that Ramadan is the month of “Taqua”? Absolutely yes. This, brothers and sisters is a very serious and important issue for us Muslims. We need to clearly differentiate what in Islam is an END, and what in Islam is a MEANS to an END.

I was discussing this issue with a friend, and he gave me an excellent example. He said that when he was young, getting a driving license and having a car was a very clear end in his mind. But now, as he is older, wiser and has responsibilities, and the end has been achieved, he has become aware that what was an absolute end a few years ago is now no more than a means to a new end. Does this now make sense. When we teach our children to pray, to fast and to read the Quran, initially, all these are ends in themselves. However, once our children become older, wiser and have responsibilities, these ends become means to other ends. At our age, we now need to concentrate on a much more important end. This end is achieving “Taqua”. I know that some of you are already thinking ahead and are already asking themselves; is “Taqua” really the ultimate end, or does it become a means to a more significant aim?

Let us look at another example. Many parents here have gone through the experience of admission exams to secondary schools. Last weekend I was standing in the queue to collect my son after his exams. The entire previous year was spent concentrating on this aim, to pass the entrance exam. Once the exam is over, we now have one of two outcomes. Should my son pass, this exam no longer stays as an end, but automatically becomes the means to a further step in his life. Should he however fail to pass, the exam remains an end. Does this make sense? Do we see the relevance of understanding ends and means? We must successfully pass our initial ends so as they ultimately become means to further ends. We cannot afford stopping at the first end, because, as the example tells us, it is a declaration of failure.

This, brothers and sisters, is what I want to get to. As Allah teaches us in this month that there is a progression from mercy, to forgiveness to salvation and paradise, we must also realize that what was an end yesterday should now be a means to another end. The Muslim should not be standing still. Muslims must move forwards. We must put ahead of us the ultimate aim in our lives. But before we get to the ultimate aim, let us ask this question again:

If I believe that Ramadan is the month of mercy, the month of forgiveness, and the month of salvation and gaining paradise, do I gain this mercy, this forgiveness and this salvation simply by fasting? Is paradise really so easy?

I think we now realize that the answer is very unlikely. We heard last week the hadeeth that stated: "He who does not stop lying and giving false witness has no need to fast from food and water" This is in Saheeh Al-Bukhari.:

☆ من لم يدع قول الزور، والعمل به، فليس لله حاجة في أن يدع طعامه
وشرابه ☆ البخاري

In this hadeeth, we are told that the most important aspect of what we think Ramadan is about, that is fasting, is actually **not** the most important aspect of Ramadan. This hadeeth clearly tells us that fasting is not an **end** but a **means**. The aims in this hadeeth are to stop lying and giving false witness. The hadeeth tells us that if we cannot achieve these aims, the means is no longer necessary. Fasting is no longer necessary.

We also know of this hadeeth:

☆ ليس الصيام من الأكل والشرب، إنما الصيام من اللغو والرفث؛ فإن
سألك أحد، أو جهل عليك، فقل: إني صائم ☆ ابن خزيمة

"Fasting is not abstaining from food and water only, but it is also abstaining from nonsense chit chat and obscenity; and if someone should insult you or was unfair to you in ignorance say: I am fasting" Narrated by Ibn Khuzaima ☆ إني صائم ☆

This hadeeth again confirms that the aim of fasting is not to stop eating and drinking, but the aim is to improve our conduct, and fasting is the means to do so. Is the picture getting clearer?

Ramadan is the month of "Taqua". Fasting is the only act of worship that is purely between you and Allah(SWT). Nobody knows if you are fasting or not. You get the true sense that Allah is watching you. No one knows how hungry or thirsty you are. Ramadan is the month for self improvement. Ramadan is the month upgrading our Iman. For those who use computers, you are familiar with upgrades. A few years ago, we had windows 95, then windows 98, then 2000, then 2003, and now 2007. All the programs get upgraded. Ask yourselves, what happens to a program that fails to get an upgrade? Does it last? Highly unlikely.

Now ask yourself, have I upgraded my Iman from 98, from 2000, from 2003, or am I still on the same program of 98. Am I a better Muslim. Do I use the means that Allah has

prescribed for me to upgrade, or is my program of Iman still the same as it was ten years ago.

Brothers and sisters, which ever way you look at Islam, it is a wonderful way of life. It is challenging, it is uplifting and it is fulfilling. We need to understand this wonderful way of life as it should be understood. Fasting is a means, Taqua is an end. Once “Taqua” is in our grasp, and that is a huge leap of faith, we move on to the ultimate aim. Do we know what this ultimate aim is. Do we know what the ultimate aim of the Muslim is:

It is achieving the pleasure of Allah, “Ridha-Llah”.

As I was getting into the spirit of Ramadan, and the spirit of taraweeh, the focus of this point has missed me completely until I recently heard this statement by a scholar on TV:

“My aim in life is for Allah to be pleased with me”

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله لي ولكم

2nd Khutbah:

الحمد لله ثم الحمد لله. الحمد لله نستعينه ونستغفره، ونعوذ بالله من شرور
أنفُسِنَا وَسَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. أما بعد:

“My aim in life is for Allah to be pleased with me”

If you are a star trek fan you might say that my prime directive is for Allah(SWT) to be pleased with me. Once you recognize what the prime directive is, everything that you do starts to fit in place, because everything that you do becomes a means to that wonderful end. Even achieving “Taqua” becomes a mean to that end. This is our beautiful relationship with Allah as explained by Islam. Once you realize this you realize that everything else is not the ultimate aim, but are temporary aims to achieve the pleasure of Allah.

Let us now take a simple, but recurring example. I can come to the Jama’t prayers every Friday on time. This is an aim that I have worked very hard to achieve. But in doing so,

have I achieved the pleasure of Allah. Is Allah happy with me? Do I think Allah will be pleased with me if, let us say, I remain arrogant. Do I think Allah will be pleased with me if I continue to cheat? Do I think Allah will be pleased with me if I keep a heart full of envy, jealousy, anger, hatred or discontent with what Allah has ordained for me. Have I achieved my aims in Islam by coming to Friday Jama' prayers on time. The answer is clearly no. Attending regular Friday Jama' prayers in this Masjed was my aim when I came to Altrincham. But once I have achieved this aim, have I started thinking of a further aim, or have I just stopped there?

This how beautiful Islam is. Islam demands of us to ask the right questions. In this holy month, as we ask for mercy, as we ask for forgiveness and for salvation, we need to sincerely ask ourselves repeatedly, is Allah pleased with me? What can I do to make Allah be pleased with me?

Have I gained the pleasure of Allah? I firmly believe that we should have this question hanging in big letters somewhere in our houses so that we never forget it.

“Have I gained the pleasure of Allah”

Not only that, but this question should be asked every day, with no exception. Have I gained the pleasure of Allah?

Once we master this question, we realize that all our Ibadat, all our actions, all our thoughts and all our feelings are the means to this end, and not an end in themselves.

Bettering my Ibadat, increasing my good deeds and bettering my conduct are all intermediate aims. However, as we better ourselves as Muslims, we should not tap ourselves on the back and feel that we have achieved our aims. No, there is always that most important ultimate aim; have I achieved the pleasure of Allah?

Let us finish by looking at some hadeeth which may guide us as to what will ISA, make Allah(SWT) be pleased with us:

إن الله لا ينظر إلى صوركم وأجسامكم ولكن ينظر إلى قلوبكم وأعمالكم

God does not look at your features or your bodies, but looks at your hearts and deeds.

Good deeds and good hearts will gain you the pleasure of Allah.

☆ المسلم أخو المسلم ، لا يظلمه ولا يُسلمه . من كان في حاجة أخيه كان الله في حاجته ، ومن فرج عن مسلم كربةً ، فرَّجَ اللهُ عنه كربةً من كُرب يوم القيامة ، ومن سترَ مسلماً ستره اللهُ يوم القيامة ☆ (البخارى ومسلم)

The Muslim is the brother of the Muslim. He does not transgress against him and is fair to him. If he is in his brother's need, God will be in his need. If he helps to relieve him from a difficulty, God will relieve him from one of the difficulties of the day of Judgment. If he shields a Muslim from harm, God will shield him on the day of Judgment. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Standing by your brother and sister will gain you the pleasure of Allah.

And finally this hadeeth which describes even more things that will gain us the pleasure of Allah:

عن أبي هريرة ، رضي الله عنه ، عن النبي ﷺ قال : ☆ سبعة يظلهم الله يوم لا ظل إلا ظله :
1-- الإمام العادل 2-- وشاب نشأ في عبادة الله 3-- ورجل قلبه معلق بالمسجد
4-- ورجلان تحابا في الله ، اجتمعا عليه و تفرقا عليه
5-- و رجل دعت امرأة ذات منصب وجمال ، فقال : إني أخاف الله
6-- و رجل تصدق بصدقة فأخفاها ، حتى لا تعلم شماله ما تنفق يمينه
7-- و رجل ذكر الله خالياً ففاضت عيناه ☆

Seven will be shaded on the day where there is no shade but that of Allah:

- A just leader.
- A young person raised on the worship of Allah.
- A man who's heart is attached to the masjid.
- Two men met and separated for the sake of the love of Allah.
- A man that has the fear of Allah in his heart to the extent that beauty and wealth do not lead him into sin.
- A man that is charitable purely for the sake of Allah.
- And a man that remembered Allah in privacy, and his eyes welled up with tears.

These are just a few examples of what ISA will gain us the ultimate aim in this life, gaining the pleasure of Allah