

11<sup>th</sup> July 2008

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 يُضِلِّهِ 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

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ، وَالتَّنظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا 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)*



Dear brothers and sisters, ASA.

Following on from last week's khutbah, I wanted to continue with the message of self reform. I always feel that as a Muslim in Altrincham, I am very blessed by the fact that every week, I can come to the masjid, I can sit with my brothers to share this hour. I feel a sense unity and I get my weekly reminder. Like everyone else, we all have so much to cope with, and it is absolutely wonderful to be able to have this hour and to be able to share. Last week, before coming to the khutbah, I had so many issues on my mind. I came here, I listened to the reminder, I prayed with all of you, and by the end, I felt so much better. It was a very comforting experience. It was such an undeniable positive experience to the extent that it made me wonder, how do others out there get their weekly dose of comfort?

Whatever happens during the week, I know that Friday is only a few days away. Do we as Muslims realize the amazing effect of Friday on us? This is a wonderful blessing from Allah(SWT) that has been granted to us until the Day of Judgment.

In addition to the constant burdens of life, I am quite sure that like most of us who have access to e-mail, I receive daily reminders of the threats that Islam and Muslims are under. In addition to the leaking radiator, the child that has a tummy bug, the car tax that needs renewing and so many other things, we get a daily reminder of how many of our brothers and sisters are being abused simply because they are Muslims. When you read these e-mails, for a while, you will feel depressed because you are a fellow human being and a fellow Muslim. You get the feeling that an attack on a Muslim or an attack on Islam is nothing less than an attack on you personally. There is no denying that at present we have an open day against Islam. In that moment you feel that you must do something. However, and probably like most of us, as I battle with the question of what should I do, I find that my emotions, my reactions and my judgements are now governed by anger. By the time I finish reading these e-mails I find myself being transformed into this angry and frustrated Muslim. This feeling is very depressing, and I am not sure if many of us get into the same mood. Angry and frustrated.

As such, and being the person I am, I constantly battle with this question. What does being a Muslim mean to me? The anger and frustration I feel is because I am a fellow Muslim. So, what does being a Muslim mean to you? Is it a privilege, is it an honour or is it a burden?

This to me is an interesting question. When I was younger, I never bothered to ask myself this question, and probably some of us here may say why should we ask the question in the first place? Why force the issue. I am a Muslim and that is it. Why can't I just be a Muslim without questions asked? Can't I simply be an ordinary anonymous Muslim?

Well, I have found that as I struggle with these e-mails, I find this question, “what does being a Muslim mean to me”, starts to pull me out of this angry and frustrated state.

It is actually a very interesting question; what does being a Muslim mean to us. When we hear in the news about the Taliban in Afghanistan, when we hear about what the Saudis do, when we hear about the potential conflict between the Suni and the Shi'it in Iraq, when we hear about the Danish cartoons, when we witness how Islamophobia has harmed our brothers and sisters, it is inevitable that the question forces itself on us; What does being a Muslim mean to you? Allah(SWT) in his infinite wisdom has dictated that we the Muslims of this period cannot escape by being inconspicuous Muslims. I need to know where I fit in all of this.

From my experience, my understanding of this question has definitely evolved over the years, and I think this will be the same for most of us who are in the same age bracket. As a young Muslim brought up in the Arab world, the overwhelming memory for me was that Islam in my generation in the Middle East was built on an identity that represented anti-Israeli and anti-west. This was obviously inevitable considering the fact that I witnessed two Israeli wars and the civil war in Lebanon. This part of my Islamic identity has been entrenched, for better or for worse. In other parts of the world, the Islamic identity for other Muslims may have been defined in a different way, but most likely it was also based on a reaction to a conflict.

I still remember that whenever I went to a Friday khutbah, the theme was repetitive and constant. It was always to do with the conflict between “Us” the Muslims and “Them” the “Kuffar”. Obviously sheitan was always included among “Them”. At that time I was very young and very impressionable and I probably did not understand Islam beyond this concept. Islam was still a war between “Us” and the “Kuffar”. Yes, the rituals of Islam were adhered to and the virtues of Islam were highlighted, but the overwhelming message in my young impressionable days was that Islam addressed an external conflict.

I understood that being a Muslim made me righteous because I believed in Allah, because I prayed and because I fasted. I, like most of us, definitely was made to believe that I was righteous. How could I not be righteous when I believed in Allah, prayed and fasted and those who were attacking me were the “Kuffar”. I was made to believe that Islam was my way to defend myself against “Them”. I was brought up to believe that my conflict as a Muslim was always with the outside world. If I addressed this conflict properly, then I have done well. I was made to believe that that is what Islam asked of me.

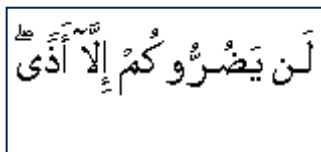
This brothers and sisters is my biggest worry. I am very worried that the way we define Islam to the next generation, to our children and to their children, is no better than the way it was defined to us. Brothers and sisters, even though I have no doubt that Muslims have, and have always had, a major conflict with “some” elements out there, and we have had numerous examples of that to date, we need to be absolutely clear that our major conflict as Muslims remains within us. I have learnt over the years that my biggest conflict does not lie with something out there, but it lies

with me. I have learnt that conquering me is the first step to sorting everything else. This is the reason why I feel so good when I come here on Fridays. I learn how to conquer myself.

I know I have a conflict with sheitan that I need to overcome. I know I have a conflict with my “Nafss” that I need to overcome. I know I have a conflict with my “desires” that I need to overcome. To me, these are the conflicts that will ultimately determine whether I am safe in this “Dunia” and in the “Hereafter”. If I lose these conflicts I lose everything. To that matter, if we lose the conflicts within us, we lose everything.

When I go on about the conflicts within, I am not putting my head in the sand and ignoring the outside threats. I am fully aware of the wicked and evil Islamophobic elements that scheme against Islam and the Muslims. Yes, we need to have our eyes wide open and we need to be proactive in defending Islam and our Muslim brothers and sisters. But let us not forget that this is not our only conflict. Not only that, but our success in defending Islam and Muslims will only come from our success in fighting our sheitan, fighting our “Nafss” and fighting our desires. The Seerah of our beloved Prophet(SAAWS) tells us that this is exactly the way forward.

From the minute Islam was born, Islam and Muslims have had this antagonism, and the Quran was clear when we read:



*“They will not be able to harm you except for some physical hurt”*  
(S3, A111)

It is inevitable that in the current climate, we are driven (by both Muslims and non-Muslims) to represent our Islam as part of a conflict with those who want to harm Islam and Muslims. For many young Muslims, just like I was many years ago when I was young, for many of these young Muslims, their Islam is being defined by the current climate. They hear about Iraq, Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, Indonesia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Sudan, Algeria and so on. It is as if I have learnt nothing from my past. We are still trying to define to our youngsters that Islam for them is still a conflict with “Them”, those that want to destroy Islam and the Muslims.

It always gives me a great headache and an even greater heartache every time I read an article about “Islamophobes” and “Islamophobia”. But then I ask myself, where is the peace of mind that Islam should give me? Where is the tranquillity and comfort of Islam? Why do I feel threatened by all this, and why am I fearful? What does Islam mean to me?

Eventually, I reach this question; who has a greater ability to harm me or to benefit me, “Them” or Allah(SWT).

عن ابن عباس قال: كنت رديف رسول الله ﷺ، فقال: "يا غلام، احفظ الله يحفظك: احفظ الله تجده تجاهك: تعرّف الى الله في الرخاء يعرفك في الشدة: وإذا سألت فسأل الله، وإذا استعنت فاستعن بالله، فإن العباد لو اجتمعوا على أن ينفعوك بشيء لم يكتبه الله لك لم يقدروا على ذلك. ولوا اجتمعوا على أن يضروك بشيء لم يكتبه الله عليك لم يقدروا على ذلك. جفت الأقلام وطويت الصحف"

Ibn Abaas narrated: "I was with the Prophet<sup>(SAAWS)</sup> when he said to me, (and I a young boy at the time); "Oh young boy, keep to Allah, and Allah will safe keep you. Keep to Allah and you will find him ahead of you. Get to know Allah in times of ease, and Allah will know you in times of strife. If you ask for anything, ask Allah. If you seek help, seek the help of Allah. For if all the beings have gathered to benefit you in something that Allah has not written for you, they will not be able to benefit you. And if they all gather to harm you in something that Allah has not written against you, they will not be able to harm you. The pens have dried and the books have been folded shut."

So I come back to the first question; what does Islam mean to us?

I have a responsibility to my family and to my children to change their perception that Islam first and foremost is the religion of self reform. Last khutbah, brother Munir mentioned the following aya, which I know has been mentioned many times before, but it defines precisely what we need to do as Muslims:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ  
وَالْحِجَارَةُ

**"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones"** (S66, A6)

That must always be the ultimate aim of whatever conflict we face, whether it is internal or external. This is in fact the ultimate aim of our worldly life, and nothing short of this is acceptable. Therefore, whenever as a Muslim you are faced with a conflict, remember this aya

and ask yourself; how should I address this conflict to save me and my family from hell fire? Very simple, but yet a very serious question.

Praise be to Allah, I now feel confident that the sensible answer remains the fact that my biggest fight is still within myself. The attacks that sheitan throws at me, that my “Nafss” throws at me, that my desires and this “Dunia” throw at me are far greater and far more serious than any other attack from someone who hates Islam and the Muslims. To me this is the most important message for today:

**The attacks from sheitan, from my “Nafss”, from my desires and from the love of this “Dunia” are far greater and far more serious than any other attack from someone who hates Islam and hate the Muslims.**

For that reason, whenever I feel threatened, I go back to the seerah and learn about our beloved Prophet(SAAWS), and amazingly, I feel much better and more able to take on these external conflicts. I feel that rather than being an adversary, I can actually be a guide. I feel that my energy should focus on supporting my brothers and sisters and on highlighting the virtues of Islam. This is definitely following in the example of the Prophet(SAAWS).

أقول قولي هذا وأستغفر الله لي ولكم

2<sup>nd</sup> Khutbah:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ثُمَّ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ. الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ  
أَنْفُسِنَا وَسَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا . أَمَا بَعْدُ :

I will end the khutbah by mentioning some of the events that took place after the victory of Makah.

Because of time restraint, I will mention only two incidents. These should define what it is like to have conquered oneself.

When the Prophet(SAAWS) returned victorious to Makah, he stayed in Makah 19 days. Where do you think this victorious leader would stay? Makah is at his feet so to speak. History has shown us what leaders do when they are victorious, so where do you think the Prophet(SAAWS) stayed.

He stayed in a tent. He was asked, why not return to your own home, the home that he shared with Khadija(RAA) and his children. He replied; Has Qureish left me a home? Ikrema has taken over this home and sold it off when the Prophet(SAAWS) escaped from Makah 8 years ago. Did the Prophet(SAAWS) demand his home back. It has been illegally taken from him. No, the Prophet(SAAWS) said, we do not transgress against anyone. In Islam there is no transgression.

The second incident is what happened with Ikrema Ibn Abi Jahl. He was a staunch enemy of Islam and the Muslims. The Prophet(SAAWS) did not give him amnesty and he was one of the ten that were not given amnesty. He ran away fearing for his life. His wife embraced Islam and asked the Prophet(SAAWS) to pardon him and accept him back for Ikrema was a leader amongst his people. The Prophet(SAAWS) thus pardoned him. His wife runs after him and catches up with him as he was getting on a ship to escape. The captain asked Ikrema “Akhless”, which means take the shahada before embarking on a sea voyage. Ikrema said, this shahada is what I have been running away from in the first place. His wife catches up with him at this moment and tells him that the Prophet(SAAWS) has pardoned him. Ikrema thinks for himself and realises that it does not make sense anymore to run away and the best for him is to return.

On his way back, the Prophet(SAAWS) notices that he is approaching, so he tells his companions; Ikrema is coming to you as a Muslim and as a believer, so do not utter obscenities against his father (and we know what his father has done to the early Muslims). The Prophet(SAAWS) is telling his companions, do not utter obscenities against his father, for these obscenities will only hurt the living and they do not reach the dead. This is the heart of the Muslim.

When Ikrema arrives, the Prophet(SAAWS) smiled at him, took off his outer garment and laid it down besides him and asked Ikrema to sit on it next to him. At this juncture, Ikrema asked an incredible question. I will leave you to ponder for a second, what did Ikrema ask? What did Ikrema ask?

He asked the Prophet(SAAWS), what is your message? (Illama Tad'ou).

Can we believe that? Many years of external conflict, of fighting and hatred, and Ikrema does not even know what is the message of the man he hated most. He did not know what the message he was prepared to kill and to die for. Does this tell us anything?

The Prophet(SAAWS) replied, I call for the strengthening the ties of kinship, and it is the reason we called for you. I call for the best of conduct. I call for prayers and I call to the Oneness of Allah.

What did Ikrema reply. Ikrema said: “Inna haza la-shai'on jameel”. He said, this is indeed a wonderful thing.