

18th June 2010

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلّٰهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ 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 اللّٰهُ .

We praise him and ask him for help and forgiveness. We ask him for protection from the evilness within ourselves and from our own bad deeds. Whom-so-ever God guides to the truth no one can lead astray, and whom-so-ever He leaves misguided, no one has the power to guide.

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

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ
وَآتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“O you who believe! Be mindful of your duty towards 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.”(Al-Hashr, 59:18)



Dear Brothers and sisters, ASA. I would like to carry on from what Brother Basil was talking about last week. Allah(SWT) in the glorious Quran and in this great Surat says:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَالْعَصْرَ (١) إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ (٢) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ (٣)

“By (the Token of) time. Verily mankind is in loss. Except those who believe, and do good work, and exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to patience and constancy” (Al-Assr, 103:1-3)

This is one of the most defining Surat in the Quran for us, for mankind. It is the testimony to us that indeed, we are all on a path of loss. Should we make a conscious decision that we do not want to go down the path of loss, we have to do four things. The road to salvation on this earth and in the hereafter demands four things:

- ***Except those who believe,***
- ***and do good work,***
- ***and exhort one another to truth,***
- ***And exhort one another to patience and constancy.***

The road to our salvation starts with believing. The next step is defined as “doing good work”. The third and fourth steps are to help each other to stay steadfast on that road. To do that, we need to enjoin and exhort one another to the truth and to patience and constancy. For this khutbah, we will only look at the issue of “doing good work”.

A reasonable question that one may ask is what do we understand by “doing good work”, or “doing good deeds”. **عَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ**.

My usual understanding of this term was that of doing something good. Giving in charity, helping others, being of good character, being honest and truthful, being good to your parents, your family, your neighbours and your brothers and sisters and doing the obligatory acts of worship. Should one want to excel further, they can do extra “nawafel” of prayers and of fasting and of charity. These were the sort of things one would aspire to when we wanted

to do good deeds. Doing good deeds was a positive act. This was my understanding until I heard a recent talk which addressed this particular aspect of my understanding of Islam: doing good deeds.

This scholar asked the question: what is the most important and the most fundamental of good deeds. Let us think for a second what this could be. Is it being truthful? Is it being good to your parents? Is it doing the acts of worship? Well, I was taken back when the scholar said that the most fundamental of doing good deeds is “not to do what Allah(SWT) has forbidden us to do”.

The best of good deeds is not to do what Allah has forbidden.

The Prophet(SAAWS) said:

إِتَّقِ مَحَارِمَ اللَّهِ تَكُنْ أَحْسَنَ الْعَابِدِينَ

Avoid what Allah has forbidden, you become the best of worshipers.

Avoid what Allah(SWT) has forbidden and you become the best of worshipers. That is what our beloved Prophet(SAAWS) tells us. In his lecture, the scholar went on to explain why this is the case. Why is it that avoiding what Allah has forbidden is the best of good deeds? A number of factors were mentioned to explain this issue.

Firstly, when one looks at fasting and prayers which are the corner stones of our acts of worship, they have a defined time scale. We pray for a few minutes and then we finish. We fast a few days and then we finish. But to avoid doing what is forbidden, to avoid “Haram”, this has no time frame; it is a necessary deed throughout every minute of our life. Secondly, even children can perform the obligatory acts of worship and indeed even the hypocrites can do the same, but it is truly those who are truthful and those who are of a strong “Iman” that can avoid what Allah(SWT) has forbidden, both in the open and in secret.

مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَجَاءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُنِيبٍ

“Who feared (Allah) Most Gracious in secret, and brought a heart turned in devotion to Him” (Qaaf, 50:33)

To avoid what Allah(SWT) has forbidden takes us to a different level of Iman and of worship.

Another aspect of the difference between doing what has been ordered and avoiding what has been forbidden is seen in the licences that we have been given with regards the obligatory acts of worship. There are licences for prayers, licences for fasting and licences for Zakat. When it comes to avoiding what Allah(SWT) has forbidden, there is no licence. However, there is no licence in committing “Haram”. A Muslim cannot claim that his love for money is so overwhelming that he can take “Haram” money. There is no licence in “Zina”. There is no licence in “Haram”.

The Prophet(SAAWS) said:

مَا نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْهُ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ، وَمَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِهِ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا سِطَّعْتُمْ

Avoid what I have forbidden you to do. What I have ordered you to do, then do as much as you possible can.

When it comes to doing what we have been asked to do, we are given licences and we are asked to do what we can within our possibility. When it comes to avoiding what has been forbidden, there is no negotiation: avoid what I have forbidden you to do.

In explaining the emphasis of avoiding what Allah(SWT) and the Prophet(SAAWS) have forbidden, many examples were given of the balance of doing what is good against not avoiding what has been forbidden. One such example is in the hadeeth where the companions asked the Prophet(SAAWS) about the woman who was known to perform her acts of worship and did a great deal of extra prayers. The Prophet(SAAWS) said that she will be in the fire because she harmed her neighbours with her tongue. The balance of this woman’s deeds was clearly heavier on the side of being of harm to your neighbour. The balance fell on the side of NOT avoiding what has been forbidden.

In a book on the “major sins” by Imam Muhammad Al-Thahabi, one of the major forbidden sins is that of harming one’s neighbour. A sin that may seem almost irrelevant to our daily routine, but Islam takes the wellbeing of the neighbour very seriously as this hadeeth tells us.

Brothers and sisters, do we see the balance that the Prophet(SAAWS) has set for us. There is no doubt in the mind of any Muslim as to the important aspects of “Ibadat”, our acts of

worship. But in this hadeeth, the Prophet(SAAWS) is setting the balance for us. It is the balance of doing a great deal of worship against not avoiding something that Allah(SWT) has forbidden. What was the clear message? Which weighed most heavily on the day of judgement?

In another incident after the campaign of Khaibar, the companions were naming the companions who have been killed. They were mentioning the name of the companion and saying he was a “Shaheed”, until they came to one name, and the Prophet(SAAWS) said; he is not, I can see him in the fire for he has taken a garment from the spoils before it was justly distributed. When the companions searched him, they found a garment with him that he took unjustly.

Can we see the balance here? This man was amongst the companions of the Prophet(SAAWS). He has just fought along the ranks of the Muslims and has died doing so, yet, he took what was not lawful while no one was watching him. The Arabic term is “Ghal”. In doing so, he has managed to tip the balance against him despite the massive amount of good deeds that he has just done. Islam tells us that the balance of one stolen garment has outweighed this man’s “Shahada”.

Brother Basil mentioned in his last khutbah the hadeeth where the Prophet(SAAWS) mentioned that the man would come on the day of Judgement with good deeds that are as great as the mountains of “Tihama” yet Allah(SWT) will make it of no value, “Haba’an manthoura”. The reason was that when this person was behind closed doors, they transgressed against what Allah(SWT) has forbidden.

Brothers and sisters, the aim of highlighting such a fundamental issue in Islam is not to simply put the fear of Good in us, even though it is important, but it is for us to understand our “Deen” as it should be understood and to realise that the emphasis of our “Deen” is to establish a good society, a safe society, a just society and a healthy society. When asked as to what has been forbidden in Islam, Allah(SWT) tells us:

وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيَجْلِلُ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ

“Forbids them what is wrong and evil: and allows them as lawful what is good and prohibits them from what is bad (harmful)” (Al-A’raaf, 9:157)

This is ayah 157 in Surat Al-A’raaf, Surat 9. Allah(SWT) makes it very clear for us that what has been forbidden for us is essentially that which is wrong and harmful. In Islam, what is “Haram”, what is forbidden, is that which is of harm. One sometimes wonders where the English word “harm” came from. When people indulge in what is “Haram”, there is potential harm to the person, to the family, to society, to the economy, to the environment, to justice,

and so on. This is why scholars define that the avoidance of what is unlawful is the highest form of “doing good deeds”.

Abdullah Ibn Umar(RAA) said I would rather avoid one suspicious dirham rather than give 100,000 dirham in charity. That is how the Sahabah understood the “Deen”. Is this how we understand it now? We hear now and again that some wealthy Muslims give in charity to balance some of their dodgy dealings as if trying to purify their unlawful money. They are of the understanding that as long as they give in charity, somehow they can address the balance of committing what is forbidden by doing “good deeds”. If we take on board what Abdullah ibn Umar said, they have to give in charity 100,000 times more than what they have earned to even get close to addressing the balance.

Salman Al-Farissi(RAA) was once approached by a man telling him that he has great difficulty doing “qiyamul-lail”. This man was worried that beyond the obligatory Isha’ he is having difficulty doing extra. What did this companion tell this man? What was his understanding of our “Deen” that made him say this? Salman said; do not transgress against what Allah has forbidden during the day and you will not be in need of “qiyamul-lail” during the night”.

Brothers and sisters, we need to re-establish in our understanding of Islam this fundamental concept:

إِتَّقِ مَحَارِمَ اللَّهِ تَكُنْ أَحْسَنَ الْعَابِدِينَ

Avoid what Allah has forbidden, you become the best of worshipers.

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلكم

2nd Khutbah:

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

إِتَّقِ مَحَارِمَ اللَّهِ تَكُنْ أَحْسَنَ الْعَابِدِينَ

Avoid what Allah has forbidden, you become the best of worshipers.

Allah(SWT) says in the Holy Quran:

وَيَجْزَى الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنَى (٣١) الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَابِ رِ التَّائِبِ وَالْقَوَّاحِشَ إِلَّا اللَّمَمَ

“And rewards those who do the best of deeds, with what is best. Those who avoid the great sins and shameful deeds, and only (falling into) small faults” (An-Najm, 53:31-2)

Allah(SWT) tells us in this ayah that those who do the best of deeds, الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا , are those who avoid the great sins and shameful deeds.

Brothers and sisters, we know full well how difficult it is to refrain from falling into sin. I mentioned the book entitled “The great sins”. In it, there is a list of no less than 74 great sins. My first thought when I looked at this book was that there were actions in the list that I did not for a second think that they would be included amongst the “great sins”. So, probably, one of the first acts for us is to go back to the basics and find out what actually constitute a major sin. Betrayal, giving false witness, lying, slandering, earning unlawful money in all manners, harming the neighbour, harming Muslim brothers and sisters and harming people in general. All these are included in the list of the great sins. Great sins are not just to kill, to steal or to commit adultery.

The Prophet(SAAWS) says in hadeeth saheeh: *The prayer to the prayer, the Jum’a to the Jum’a and Ramadan to Ramadan will wipe out the sins in between.* Many Muslims have understood this hadeeth as meaning all types of sin. Indeed, some Muslims have taken on board the wrong assumption by thinking that as long as they pray, their sins will be forgiven, irrespective of how great or small that sin is. It is therefore important to remind ourselves of the ending of the hadeeth: *“The prayer to the prayer, the Jum’a to the Jum’a and Ramadan to Ramadan will wipe out the sins in between as long as the great sins are avoided”.*

Brothers and sisters, let us all take this opportunity to remind ourselves, and I remind myself first. Let us look closely at what Islam defines as a great sin. That needs to be our starting point. Then let us start addressing them and enjoin with one another to help each other to be the best of worshipers. When we recognise that we have fallen into such a sin, let us first be truthful to ourselves. Once we have accepted that what we have been doing is forbidden, let us start turning towards Allah(SWT) with a sincere “Tawbah” hoping that Allah(SWT) will accept our repentance and forgive our past transgressions.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً تَصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ
عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

“O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance: in the hope that your Lord will remove from you your sins and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow” (At-Tahreem, 66:8)

This is how we turn away from our major sins, by turning towards Allah with sincere repentance and with the commitment of not going back to what we did. This is where the heart needs to submit to its creator in the hope of forgiveness. By doing a sincere repentance, we are committing one of the greatest acts of worship that Allah(SWT) loves of us. By turning back to Allah, and by making a commitment to turn away from what Allah has forbidden.

At the end of Surat Al-Furqan, we read an amazing ayah. This ayah describes what becomes of the sins of those who have committed great sins, but then turn towards Allah with repentance, with belief and with doing good deeds:

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

“Except for the one who repents, believes, and works righteous deeds, for Allah will change the evil deeds of such persons into good, and Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Al-Furqan, 25:70)

What an amazing ayah when one starts to understand the significance of the term “doing good deeds”. In this ayah, when the context is understood, it is the one who turns towards Allah(SWT) and repents with sincerity. The one who establishes a firm belief and submits the heart and the one who does good deeds by avoiding what Allah(SWT) has forbidden and doing what Allah(SWT) has ordered. By doing so, not only are the bad deeds forgiven and removed, but Allah’s reward is even greater. The reward is far greater. The sins are changed to what is good. No act of worship does that except sincere repentance and avoiding what Allah has forbidden.