

July 22nd 2011

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ ، نَحْمَدُهُ وَ نَسْتَعِينُهُ وَ نَسْتَغْفِرُهُ ، وَ نَعُوذُ 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 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 الله to whom there is no partner and I testify that Muhammad ﷺ is his servant and messenger

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

"And seek Tawbah and return unto Allah altogether, O believers, so that you may be successful" (An-Noor, 24:31)



Dear Brothers and sisters, ASA. As we nearing the blessed month of Ramadan, I would like to discuss with you an important concept in Islam. The concept is that of work, {‘amal}, عمل in this life. The two reasons for that are firstly to emphasise the value of good work in this life and secondly to dismiss some of the myths about the concept of reward and punishment on this earth.

First of all, there is no doubt that Muslims believe that this life on earth is “Darru-l ‘Amal”, a dwelling of work. It is a testing period for us and we will, ISA, be judged on our deeds. This concept is seen throughout the Holy Quran, and as one example, we read in Surat Al-Mulk:

تَبْرَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Blessed be He in Whose hands is The Dominion: and He has all power over all things. He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deeds: and He is The Exalted in Might, The Forgiving” (Al-Mulk, 67:1-2)

We also have many examples in the Hadeeth, and one such example is the familiar hadeeth from Abu Huraira(raa) who reported Allah's Messenger(saaws) as saying: *When a man dies, his work comes to an end, but for three; a running charity, knowledge that is of benefit, or a pious son, who prays for him.* (Sahih Muslim Book 13. Hadeeth 4005.)

This hadeeth again emphasises that we are on life to do work. When we pass away, we can no longer do any work, except for the three conditions where work that was initiated before we die carries on “working” for us.

Brothers and sisters, if asked why we exist, the simple answer is that we are here on earth to work. In Islam, we know that part of this work involves “worship”. Allah(swt) makes it very clear for us in Surat Ath-Thariyat:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“And I have created the jinn and mankind only for that they worship Me” (Ath-Thariyat, 51:56)

Our prayers, our fasting, our Hajj and other rituals are all “deeds”. They are very important deeds, but in Islam, they are not the only deeds expected of us. Normal deeds of everyday living are also part of our existence on this earth and to that matter, part of our worship. Good work that earns a person a lawful income is considered a great work in Islam. Work helping and benefiting others is also considered as great work in Islam whether it is voluntary or paid.

Looking after our elderly parents and bringing up our children is also magnificent work in Islam. Work in spreading the message of Allah(swt) and in promoting equality and peace and so forth is also great work. That is why we are here on earth.

Islam tells us we are not here simply to exist, just like any other creature of Allah's creation, but we are here to work. sUmar(raa) saw a group of worshipers sitting in the Masjid all the time. When he asked them about what they are doing, they replied: "we are mutawakkil-loon", meaning we put our trust in Allah. He replied: "no, you are mutawa-akiloon, meaning you are lazy and idle", and told them to go and do some useful work. The companions of the Prophet(pbuh) understood that the concept of depending on Allah and putting our trust in Allah(swt) {Tawakkul} meant that we the Muslims should do useful and meaningful work while putting our trust in Allah(swt).

As a concept this is probably not exclusive to Muslims. People in general recognise that most of us are not born with a silver spoon in our mouths and we have to work to survive and get on in this life. This is irrespective whether we believe in creation or not. Sitting idle will get no one anywhere. Islam recognises that, but we have some differences. First, worship for us is work, secondly work is a form of worship, and thirdly we will be held to account for the work that we do.

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

"And fear the Day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be recompensed what it has earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly" (Al-Baqara, 2:281)

We also read in another ayah:

وَقُلْ أَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ
عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

"And say: Do work; for Allah will observe your work, and His Messenger and the Believers. Soon will you be brought back to the knower of what is hidden and what is evident: then will He show you the truth of all that you did" (Al-An'am, 6:135)

There is no such thing in Islam that "he got away with it". Allah(swt) tells us:

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ
وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

"And who-so-ever does an atom's weight of good, shall be rewarded the same. And who-so-ever does an atom's weight of evil, shall be rewarded the same" (Al-Zalzala, 99:7-8)

Muslims know very well that we will be held to account for everything including the slightest thing that we do. If it is good, we will get the reward, no matter how small the deed was. An example is the hadeeth when one is presented with a mountain worth of good deeds on the day of judgement but he is unable to recognise what he did for that. The answer was a small good deed that he probably did not think much of, but it grew and grew for him by the will of Allah(swt) until on the day of judgement, he is presented with a mountain worth of good deeds. This is why Islam tells us “gain charity, even if it is by a piece of date”.

On the other hand, there are small bad deeds, or bad deeds that appear small to us, but on the day of judgement, they weigh very heavily against us. An example is given by the Prophet(saaws) in a hadeeth when he said to A'isha(raa): “you have said a word that when mixed with the water of the ocean it will contaminate it”. And in another hadeeth, the Prophet(saaws) warns us against the words that we use and that a word can throw the person into hellfire for seventy years.

The main thing for us to recognise is that Islam is fair, and more than that, Allah(swt) tells us that none will be dealt with unjustly. Allah(swt) is our judge and Allah(swt) is The Just.

Once we accept the concept of work and the concept of judgement, we have to accept the concept of resurrection and the day of judgement. There is no point in all that if we do not believe that we will be resurrected. In fact, this used to be one of the arguments that the disbelievers used against the Prophet(saaws):

وَكَاثُوا يُقُولُونَ أَيِّدًا مِّتًّا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظْمًا أَعْيَانًا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ

“And they used to say "what! when we die and become dust and bones, shall we then indeed be raised up again” (Al-Waqi'a, 56:47)

In Islam, it is an integral part of our belief that we will be resurrected, we will be brought to account and we will be rewarded or punished accordingly. This is what we believe.

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَ لَكُمْ

2nd Khutbah:

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

Brothers and sisters, Allah(swt) tells us:

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ
وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

“And who-so-ever does an atom's weight of good, shall be rewarded the same. And who-so-ever does an atom's weight of evil, shall be rewarded the same” (Al-Zalzala, 99:7-8)

The concept of work in Islam dictates that we will be judged according to what we do, and we will be recompensed in kind. The message that we have managed to confuse in our minds is “when”. Is there such a thing as punishment for our deeds by Allah in this world, and indeed reward in this world, or is it that the reward and punishment is in the hereafter.

The reason for bringing this up is that we do come across situations when our understanding of this concept is challenged. For instance, how do we feel when someone who is disobedient to Allah has an affliction? Do we tend to say “this is God’s punishment”; “they got what they deserved”. When we witness disasters such as an earth quake, a tidal wave or any other catastrophe, do we get a sense that this is a punishment from Allah(swt). And equally, when we witness good fortune o people, do we tend to say: “this is God’s reward”.

Brothers and sisters, this is where we need to get a firm grip on the concept that **this is a life of work and not a life of judgement.** The concept of reward and punishment is not the main aspect of our lives here in this life. It is the Hereafter that is set for judgement and not this life.

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ
بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ لَّنْ يَجِدُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ مَوْثِقًا

“Your Lord is the Forgiver, Full of Mercy. If He took them to task (now) for what they earn, He would hasten on the punishment for them; but theirs is an appointed term from which they will find no escape” (Al-Kahf, 18:58)

There is no doubt that Allah(swt) has put for us in place certain rules which are there to protect us. When someone gets drunk and injures themselves or others, this is not “punishment” but is a consequence of such activity. In my line of work, I see many people injuring themselves doing various silly things. This is not “punishment” but inevitable consequences. Similarly we see it with drug abuse, gambling, speeding and so on. In fact, when we look at manmade law, such as using the seat belt, using a protective helmet, keeping to speed limits, avoiding drink driving and other laws, they are there to protect us. When one falls foul of such an activity and is harmed, no one says it is your “punishment” for not following the law of the land. It is simply a clear consequence of action.

Islam is no different. We have consequence of actions on this earth for both good and bad deeds. However, there are occasions when punishment and reward do take place on earth.

We know that there are good deeds that are rewarded on earth. Allah(SWT) tells us:

وَاِذْ تَاَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

“And when your Lord proclaimed: If you give thanks, I will give you more” (Ibraheem, 7:7)

We also know in various hadeeth that there are certain rewards in this life, but essentially it is there for us to do more good work.

What about punishment. Is there punishment on earth? We know that there are trials. We will all be tested. That is part of the “Sunnah” of Allah(swt). The one thing that I want to bring to your attention is that when Allah(swt) loves a servant, Allah(swt) may wish to settle the account of the servant on this earth so that when the believer meets his Lord on the day of judgement, his slate is clean. This is the concept of “recompense” for the believer on earth that we need to appreciate before we look at those who disbelieve and disobey.

{According to the calendar of Umul-Qura, today, Friday the 22nd July, is the 21st of Sha’ban of the Hijri year 1432. As such, it is most likely that we will have a universal start for Ramadan on Monday 1st August. The new moon will not be visible anywhere in the world for Ramadan to start on the 31st July. As such, our first Taraweeh prayers will ISA on Sunday 31st of July.}