

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Allah's Guidance is Clear:

Nothing Changes until You Change Yourself

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

For each there are angels following one another, before him and behind him, who guard by the order of Allah. And truly Allah does not change a condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends evil for a people, there is no keeping it back. And besides Him, for them there is no protector.

In another 'āyat, He says:

That is because Allah does not change the grace He has bestowed upon a people until they change what is in themselves. And Allah is indeed hearing and knowing.

Finally in Surah Fussilat:

Whoever does good, it is for his own soul. Whoever does evil, it is to his own detriment, and the Lord never wrongs His worshipers.

What is the meaning of these words, that Allah doesn't change the condition of a people unless they change themselves? *Subhāna-Llāh*, it's a very important 'āyat that indicates to us that Allah Swt in His perfect justice and wisdom doesn't change the condition of a people from good to bad, or from bad to good, from ease to hardship or from hardship to ease unless they change that condition within themselves. So if they are in a state of righteousness and goodness and they change, Allah will change things for them with

punishment, hardship, drought, famine, disunity and other kinds of things, which one would normally consider to be punishments. If one changes from a state of goodness, Allah says, **“And your lord is not at all unjust to His slaves.”** Or He may give them respite and time so that they might turn to the right path. But if they don’t turn to the right path, they may be seized unexpectedly, as He says:

So when they forget of which they had been reminded, We open for them the gates of every pleasant thing, until in the midst of their enjoyment of that which they were given, all of a sudden we took them in punishment and punished with them destruction, deep regrets, and sorrows, sparing all goodness.

Auudhu billahe minash-Shaytan ar-rajīm. Or they may be given respite until the Day of Resurrection, when their punishment will be more severe, as Allah Swt says: **“Consider not that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers do, but He gives them respite until the day when their eyes will stare in horror.”** Meaning that they are given a respite until their death, and then will be greater and more severe punishment.

We have choice, and the ability to change. A person may be in a state of evil or sin, and if they repent to Allah and turn back, and they regret their sins and become obedient, Allah changes their state of hardship and misery to one of ease and unity and righteousness. Because of their good deeds, and their repentance to Allah, they are glorified and they are exalted. In another ‘*āyat*, He says: **“That is so because Allah will never change the grace He has bestowed upon a people until they change what is in their own selves.”** *Nai’mah* in this verse tells us they are in a state of ease, comfort, and goodness, and then they change and turn to sin. Their situation will be changed, and there is no power and no strength but in Allah. Or, they may be given respite as we talked about.

The opposite is also true. If they are in a state of evil, disbelief, and misguidance and they repent and regret their sins, and then they become obedient, Allah changes their situation from bad to good, changes their disunity into unity and harmony. He will change their hardships to ease and plenty, and change their situation from drought and famine and lack of food or whatever they need, and make the land fertile and bring acts of goodness to them. We can all understand this is a method of universal harmony. When something is in disunity, everything around it becomes disunified, ill at ease. It also tells us the kind of power human beings have, and the influence human beings have over the earth, over the environment.

If we destroy the environment, human beings are destroyed. If we do good acts, human beings are saved. This is also very specific to an individual. Allah is telling us about the worth of every single human being also, and the method of changing things. Allah does not change the good condition of a people as long as they don't change their state themselves. We know about choice. We know about our *amanat*. We know about the power Allah gave to human beings, so it makes perfect sense. There will always be some goodness in the Muslim *ummah*. There will always be a small number of Muslims who forbid evil and who enjoin good (*maruf* and *munkar*). There will always be knowledge and wisdom and good teachings, but at a certain stage of the *ummah*, there are weaknesses and humiliation.

What we are facing in the world right now is weaknesses and humiliation. It is self-humiliation, and self-imposed weakness. The general reality that the Muslim *ummah* is in now is one of degradation, ignorance, sin, poverty, and injustice, and occupation of lands, and corruption. Muslim rulers have not been ruling by Allah's law or even human decency. They are backward and nationalistic. They lack knowledge of the world. They lack the science, the medicine, the technology; and they are selfish. Some of them have been put out, but we don't know what is going to replace them. If we as Muslims wish this all to be changed, according to what I've read, the opposite of that is victory, glory,

honor, truth and ample food, and health, and well-being, and science and technology that serves not only the community but all of humanity, then we have to change ourselves.

Change ourselves means to really follow the Truth of the *dīn* of Islam, and the example of *Rasūlu-Llāh* (sal) and the Sahabah. We have to become patient and forward-looking, steadfast and knowledgeable, make *du'ā* and direct our worship to Allah, not to the material world; and strive hard to follow the truth and to fight the Shaytan within us and around us, and all the temptations; and have the proper *taqwa* and *khawf*, and then we will see the change in the situations of Muslims in this world and of believers in this world. You can certainly say this about every community. I'm not here giving a pastoral talk to a bunch of Baptists, so I'm going to be speaking about Islam. But there is no doubt that if I were speaking to Catholics, Christians and Jews, I could be pretty much saying the same thing about the corruption. Allah doesn't change the circumstances of a people until they change themselves. But to change yourself, you first have to recognize it.

By turning to the Islam of Nebi Mohammed (sal) and of the Sahaba; by changing our way of life, our own personal way of thinking and mentality, and our perceptions to that of one who is guided by Qur'an and by the Sunnah of *Rasūlu-Llāh* (sal), [which is] understood by the Sahabah, the *taba'ain*, the *taba-taba'ain*, and the *awliya-Llāh*, and the *shuyukh*, past and present; if we can be trustworthy and reliable and knowledgeable people and be in the process of learning and acting and advising others knowledgeably and with good *adab*; if we can be balanced, and not neglect our responsibilities in the world in terms of our work; if we can be loyal to one another and to our Path and provide for our families, being good husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters, aunties and uncles and neighbors, then we will change the circumstances.

We find today in our time there are many different calls to how you can change. Some people say you need to have the *khalifat*. We have to "return to the rule of Allah by government and kings." Yet, they don't follow those rules themselves. Others call for

throwing out the old Muslim rulers, in coups and assassinations, but they don't have a plan for the future. They want power. Some call for *jihad*, but they have no idea what jihad is. They have no knowledge of the greater *jihad* in their own soul. They don't have the power, so they get weapons. They have no leader, and they kill innocent people and destroy the land around them. How are they Muslims? People have been calling for these things since the beginning of time, let alone the beginning of Islam, and what do they seek? People have to change themselves, Allah tells us. If you are a Muslim and you want to make Islam relevant in the world we are living in, then you have to be applying your Islam in the world today. I call it Applied Sufism.

There is *takfir* against Muslims, calling each other *kufar*. They permit killing and suicides and bombings of civilians and non-Muslims. All these methods are futile; they are false; they are non-Islamic. They are inhuman, and they cannot bring any honor or nobility or victory for anyone. These issues of *jihad* or politics or *khalifat* or *takfir*, though those words are part of Islam, though they are very clearly articulated in Qur'an and the Sunnah, no one can use them properly unless they understand them properly. What will make a change it clear, easily understood, and guaranteed? It's the fundamental method of change Allah has revealed to us in Qur'an: **“Truly, Allah will not change the good condition of a people as long as they do not change their state themselves.”**

We see the negative, and we see how Muslims and others are punished because of the growing actions and sins of Muslims and others. There is no reason to believe that the opposite isn't true, that the good actions, the service, and the love of Muslims should bring love to all people. There is no real confusion on this subject, only the ego gets in the way. Allah says clearly to change yourself, change those people around you, and things will change. Allah is not calling for the *jihad*; Allah is not calling for the *khalifat*. Allah is not making *takfir*. Allah is not creating envy among people. Allah is saying,

change yourself. It's that simple. It's a simple message. But then we all know that people would much rather work on someone else than themselves.

I got a letter recently. It was from the wife of someone. She was being berated and beaten because she was "insolent, not understanding, and not Islamic." I got a letter from the husband, telling me how impudent and how miserable the wife is, and how she doesn't understand the nuances of Islam. He doesn't admit or state, "So I beat her." She says, "I made him a cup of tea. I asked him to sit down, and I asked him to talk." Where is the Islam in this? I'm being asked to... to condone? No. Someone in this room knows what I say: get out of it. Leave it. There is no Islam here. There is no humanity here. It is one thing to lose your temper once in a while. It's another thing to have to walk around in fear every minute of the day for yourself or your children. There is no Islam here. And that's the state of the world. And what am I being asked to do? To condone something and to say, "Yes, yes, it's okay"? No. You can't condone that. You must escape. That's the world we live in today.

You see in large movements, like in Egypt, people escaping one thing, but not knowing what they are coming to. Escaping to what? Who is the spokesperson for the truth in Egypt today? Where do you turn? There are hopeful hearts. In the heart is where the only hope is, in the people who want to change themselves. They want to change their circumstance, and they are willing to go out and change themselves. As long as that stays, Allah Swt will bless them. The rest of it is intolerable. Here, Allah is clear. Believe it. Nothing changes until you change yourself. Collectively, nothing changes in the community until the community changes its intention and itself. And the same nationally: until people change themselves. That's it. It's a simple rule, and a simple guideline. But how many of us think about it? Bismillah.

O Allah, we ask You for blessings upon those who are here, and those who are not here, those who are alive and those who have passed, those who are ill, and those who are well.

We ask you Allah to lift the burden off the hearts of people and give them the encouragement to change themselves, their circumstances, and their society. We ask You, Allah Swt, to give us the way to make changes in our own community that we need, and in our own families to guarantee the peace and well-being of our children, their happiness, their security in their *dīn* and in their outer life. *Amin*. Ask Allah for what you need.