



Ramadan:

The Month of Sympathy, The Month of Sabr

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, Surah al-Imran:

O You who have attained to secure belief, endure and be steadfast and strengthen each other. Guard yourselves for Allah in order that you may be successful.

Again in Surah al-Zumar, Allah says:

Say, O My worshipers who have believed, be conscious of your Lord and ward off evil from within and from without. For those who excel at good deeds in this world, there is the best of goodness and the earth of Allah is spacious. Truly those who are steadfastly patient will be rewarded without any accounting. Say, truly I am commanded to worship Allah, making my religious way of life / my dīn sincere for Him, and I am commanded to be first among those who willingly surrender to Allah.

My dear brothers and sisters, today you understand better perhaps, if we contemplate these *'āyāt*, how to become secure in your belief and to endure. That has a special meaning for us, because we have the month arriving to practice it, of Ramadan. It's very important for us to make the best of this month that has come before us. Sometimes we make it the best by seeing our faults and weaknesses and our fears; because it truly takes courage to be a good Muslim, and to reach out and open our hearts and minds to things we never saw before, or new to us and open to

us. Sometimes we make the best of it by understanding our strengths, too; seeing how strong we are in our faith and how committed we are.

Those two things are not in conflict with each other at all. To be open-minded and open-hearted and courageous is a way to combat our weaknesses and our strengths. Sometimes we make the best of it by catching ourselves doing something that is not quite right, or we are fearful. Sometimes we make the best of it by seeing that what we are doing is good. We don't differentiate between the two; it's the seeing, seeing with the eye of *basira*, of the *sirr*. That's what is important. That's what Allah Swt is reminding us of in those 'āyāt from Surah al-Zumar.

My dear brothers and sisters, this month that is coming is exactly for this kind of reflection. Sometimes I feel when I'm standing here giving the *khutbah* that it should be – and of course it is – sufficient in one way to just quote and walk away, because this is the message of today's *dars*. The month of Ramadan is upon us, a little over a week away, *alhamdulillah*. Whether we make the calculations one way or the other, the true calculation is felt in the heart. In Rajab and Sha'ban, as always, things happen for us in these months. Things happen in our families. We have been very busy. We have had many opportunities to be distracted, concerned, and worried, even, with many opportunities to serve; and even more are coming on a bus today.

I have had an opportunity to be among the Muslim girls yesterday – it was very uplifting – as well as among people who are not Muslim also in that group. We have many opportunities to give good messages in Charlottesville, and other places, and webcasting, and just to sit with kind and good people and exchange ideas and hopes. And we watch ourselves as we served also, as I always try to do. How can I do it better? How can I say things more clearly? How can I be more articulate? How can I

be more supportive? And now the month of Ramadan is upon us for reflection. We ask Allah Swt to remind us what the Prophet Mohammed (sal) said on the last day of Shaban, about the virtues of Ramadan He required of us to understand. I want to read the whole thing to you. He said,

O people, there comes upon you now a great month, a most blessed month in which lies a night that is greater in worth than more than a thousand months. It is a month in which Allah has made compulsory that which is prescribed. Fasting should be observed during the day, and He has made a special prayer by night, Taraweeh, a tradition. Whoever strives to draw near to Allah, performing any virtuous deeds during this month, any virtuous deeds for him or her shall be a reward as if he or she performed the prescribed act of worship at any other time of the year. Whoever performs a prescribed act of worship for Allah Swt, for him will be a reward of 70 prescribed acts of worship as if in any other time of year.

This is indeed a month of patience, and the true reward of patience is Paradise. It is a month of sympathy with one's fellow human beings, and in which a true believer's provisions are increased. And whosoever feeds a person performing the prescribed fast, at the end of the fast at sunset there shall be forgiveness of sins and emancipation from hell. For him or her, there shall be the same reward for those whom they have fed without the person's reward being diminished in the least. Thereupon we said, "O Messenger of Allah, none of us possess the means by which we can provide enough for the prescribed fasting person to break the prescribed fast." The Messenger of Allah (sal) said, "God grants the same rewards to one who gives a person who is performing the prescribed fast a single date, or a drink of water, or a sip of milk to end that prescribed fast."

I could have given a *khutbah* just by repeating what the Prophet (sal) said. And I have encouraged you to invite others during this month over to your homes – not just during Ramadan, of course – I hope it goes on throughout the year. And I don't want it to be organized, from an organizational point of view. I want it to be something from your heart. You see what Allah Swt says through the mouth of the Prophet (sal), what the reward is. One virtuous deed is equal to one *fard* prayer, and one prescribed prayer is equal to 70 in the Month of Sympathy. A month of sympathy—what is sympathy? When was the last time you even used the word sympathy? Can you remember it? Was it yesterday, or day before yesterday. When someone dies, you say, “I extend my condolences, my sympathy.” You may have used it recently, since unfortunately your step mother passed, may she have ease in Paradise and your father have ease in this world. Our sympathy goes out to you and your family.

By how many minutes and seconds do we calculate a month of sympathy? If I had said it was a month of air, what would have been easier? Air is here all the time. A month of water? Water is around all the time. But a month of sympathy, how do we find that sympathy? Where do we find it? The air is all around us. The water is in the well or the spigot. We have to test our own selves, and look for those opportunities to be sympathetic. He who feeds a person performing the prescribed fast in order to end for their *iftar*, there will be forgiveness for their sins and emancipation from hell. Do you want to have someone over for dinner in a week or so, even tonight? Ah, I'm a little tired. I think I'll just hold onto my sins for another day. I'll take my chances I won't die between today and tomorrow. Tomorrow, yeah, that's a good time. I'll have someone over for dinner tomorrow, or maybe Sunday. Let me check my schedule.... tomorrow.

There are many exigencies—of course there are. There are many circumstances. The kitchen isn't clean. I have a lot of leftovers; I don't want to cook again. Maybe my health is not so good. But you know something? Ramadan cures your illnesses. Any upset you have may be ameliorated. The conversation you might have that night, you may never, ever have again. It may give you some knowledge, some peace of mind, some peace of heart. And, not only that, you may give knowledge, and calm someone else's heart and mind. The happiness you have brought to someone may never have been brought to them in exactly the same way. It's a month of sacrifice; so make a little sacrifice. The Prophet (sal) said,

In this month, there are four things you should endeavor to perform in a great number. Two shall be to please your Lord, and the other two are those without which you cannot make do. Those which shall be pleasurable to your Lord are that you should in great quantity recite the testimony, bearing witness to the oneness of Allah: ash-hadu ilāha illāh wa-ash-hadu anna Muhammadan Rasūlu-Llāh

So let's begin with that, and let's end with that, and let's remember that. There is a difference that goes through your brain and heart, different vibrations if you will, different electromagnetic patterns. Sometimes something goes through your brain and comes out your tongue that shouldn't have. But when you make the shahadah, what goes in your brain and out your tongue is beautiful, transforming. To beg Allah's forgiveness for your wrong doings is the second one. Repeat the shahadah, and beg Allah's forgiveness for your wrongdoings. Wrongdoings? Not just wrong actions you did, but doing something wrong in the way you think, the way you relate, or your *adab*, in your contact with someone, your openness, your receptivity, your tolerance, your patience, your love.

For those without which you cannot make do, you should beg Allah for entry into Paradise and seek refuge in Allah. And whomsoever gave water to drink to a person doing the prescribed fast, Allah shall grant them a drink from my fountain. He promises that.

How many of you serve water to people at night when we make *iftar* here in the *masjid*? Some of you serve the water. Is there a chance you might benefit from that? What does Allah say? What does the Prophet (sal) say? ***“And whomsoever gave water to drink to a person doing the prescribed fast, Allah shall grant them a drink from my fountain, such a drink that they will never feel again thirsty until they enter Paradise.”*** When I’m sitting at my house, I have to remember not to say, “Hey, Sabreen, go get the water.” Unless I want her to have the blessing, and of course she’s my daughter, so I want her to have the blessing. We should race to the spigot to see who’s going to get the drink for the guest. Is this some kind of hagiographic silliness, some kind of historical or cultural idea? I don’t think so.

In the Holy Qur’an we read that Allah said, **“The month of Ramadan is coming. The month is a month of sabr/perseverance, patience.”** I like to think of Ramadan always in terms of perseverance. It means patience, too, but it is slightly different. People’s tendencies tend to rise to the surface at this time – agitation, anxiety, fear, worry, and self-protectiveness. Some people find illness. Some people focus on weakness. Some people see their *nafs ammāra* rising. We carry around anxieties, fears, worries, apprehensions, and memories, things that perhaps we hold too close to us sometimes. And we don’t know how to let go of them. So Allah is going to help us let go of our sensitivities, weaknesses, our tendencies, our fears, and our doubts. Allah’s system is going to help us do that; because in that system is Ramadan. And your Ramadan gets better when you remember.

It's fine if you want to hold your hands up and pray as if Allah is in the sky. That's great if you want to sit in a certain way or do extra *rak'as*. These are all wonderful things. There are traditions you might want to use or do from your cultures. Allah is not in the sky; Allah is in your heart. Allah is a perfectly balanced system, the perfectly harmonious sound, the perfectly beautiful sunset, the perfectly true Truth. Why is Jannah described in the way it is? It's harmonious, beautiful, and balanced, and we can relate to it. The point is there is consistency. Everything is beautiful to people who are beautiful. The rivers are beautiful, the sky is beautiful, even a mosquito is beautiful. The fruits are beautiful; everything tastes beautiful. Nothing rots, nothing pollutes. Nothing dies; nothing gets old; nothing gets young. Everything is in harmony.

So we want to be sensitive to the Divine Presence, sensitive to the teachings of Rasūlu-Llāh (sal), sensitive to the goodness in people around us, sensitive to the people around us and to their needs, sensitive to the hope in our souls, and sensitive to the *fitrah* that we were given when we were born, even before we were born—but not overly sensitive to illnesses and doubts and weaknesses. Allah will help us with those. Does it mean that all your illnesses will disappear? Probably not. We all know, because science has taught us, that your mental attitude has an effect on your body. At least, let's have the right mental attitude. Let's have the right *adab* toward one another. Let's respect one another. It's also the month of *rahmat*, and of *'adl*. It's a shame that sometimes people forget and they harm each other during this month.

We know that Allah has said, ***“Come towards Me and I'll come running toward you.”*** He tells us, ***“They love Me and I love them.”*** We have to get to the place in our life where, even though it's Ramadan, we are coming faster than Ramadan to the higher conclusions. Even though it's Ramadan, we are well-prepared internally.

Allah is present, and we have to get somehow to that point in life, through patience, through love, through justice, through peace, through perseverance, through greatness, to that point in our life where perseverance is not something we have to struggle with, but something we embrace, and love, and is part of our character. And we are open to that, and justice, and mercy, and all the other names, so we know how to respond. We respond to things all the time. But by what basis do we respond?

Allah Swt says, **“They love Me and I love them.”** So we begin with that, to love Allah, to love beauty, and truth, and nature, and kindness, and compassion, and mercy, and love that in people. Even if they reject you and turn away from you, even if they are afraid of you, if they doubt you, it doesn’t matter; you love them anyway. Having that response, then you can understand why Allah says, **“I walk through your feet and grasp through your hands and I speak through your lips.”** So I ask you to remember these things and make beautiful *du’ā* in this month, and remember what the Prophet (sal) said: **“O people, a great blessed month is approaching. That is Ramadan, the Month of Sabr, and the reward of sabr is Jannah.”**
Asalaamu aleikum.