

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

[The Farewell Khutbah:](#)

An Opportunity to Reflect on the Month of Ramadan

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah Swt reveals in Surah al Mu'minin:

And surely this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so be conscious of Me and ward off evil. But they have separated their affair of unity from this community of believers between them, each sect rejoicing in what they have. So leave them alone in their confusion for a while. And do they calculate by what We have given them in the way of wealth and children? We are hastening to them with the good things, but nay they do not perceive their error.

Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm. As we speak today, we have to remember, *inshā'a-Llāh*, that by the grace of Allah Swt we have survived another year by His Rahmat, and by His Nai'ma, and by His Fadl. What does that mean? We can only hope to know. The final farewell Friday of the month of Ramadan is today, according to our calculations, and begins our move to the Eid, where we move into the month of Shawwal.

Allah said in the Holy Qur'an, as revealed to the Prophet (sal), **"Lo, this your religion is one religion."** I must have received recently 3 or 4 phone calls about when is the moon rising, and when is it not rising? I get into these deep discussions about the next month, and when is the moon coming, and we want to be true to what the Qur'an tells us. At the same time, we want to remember what this is really all about. We want the moon of the Prophet Mohammed's (sal) light to rise in our hearts. And we want that moon to rise every single day of our life.

We have heard the importance of Friday, as we do every Friday. Allah Swt tells us to leave our work and hasten to the *masjid* and give praise to Allah and His Messenger, (peace be upon him, and to his family, and to the righteous *khalifs*, and especially to his daughter Fatima, and to her children, Hasan and Hussein). It is a sacred and important day, but it is only as sacred and as important as we make it for each of us. The oceans are full of fish, but everyone could go hungry if no one knew how to catch the fish. The day is sacred if you know how to make it sacred for yourself. Because this is a very unique day, in the final days of the month of Ramadan, it allows us to have more than just a blessing of the Friday, because also the doors of hell are closed. Although, I thought I saw a crack in the door last week, in my own door... I don't know about you. Maybe you saw a little light coming from the other side during Ramadan, maybe a moment of worry or fear, or doubt or anger or forgetfulness. The doors are closed.

The opportunity for us is to really reflect on ourselves and receive the blessings of Allah Swt, and that for each one of us in some was this Ramadan stays with us, as we have said for over these 40 years. We are those people who are spoken about in the Qur'an. Often, we are those who see but don't see, who hear but don't hear. In the same way, we have to be sure that we try to capture the blessings of this day. It's important that the doors of Paradise are open; but I venture to say, none of us probably feel really quite ready or qualified, at least most of us, that we have reached the status of those who have reached their place in Paradise. In this blessed month of Ramadan, we have studied, and talked about, and experienced more about this journey toward Paradise. And if we have listened to what we read in the Qur'an, in the Taraweeh, if we have listened to the *durus*, if we have listened to what our knowledge tells us, then we have *taqwa*.

We are looking forward, *inshā'a-Llāh*, to that farewell party for the friend, Ramadan, who is leaving; and a greeting for another year for the Eid. We want the friend to think, "Gee, this was not a bad place to be. I was here in good company, in *suhbat*, all month." And we should think, *inshā'a-Llāh*, "I hope I'm here next year, *inshā'a-Llāh*." We have those who were with us last year who are not with us this year. They are residing up the hill now, facing Mecca. But of course as the truth and reality has it, there are those who are here this year who won't be here, and those who aren't here now, who may be here next year. For us to understand, takes a lot of patience. We understand that for some, Ramadan doesn't come back, for many reasons. We experienced that this year.

We have to think that we may not have the opportunity to fast again, maybe for health reasons. We have to think that we have to reflect on how well we have done, or how we could have done better: a form of *muhasabat*. We need to think, "If this year, I couldn't fast because I was ill, then please Allah Swt, make me better so that I may fast next year." Don't take it as the way of your life for the rest of your life; don't take it for granted. There are people who have much more illnesses that you or I have, who are much older – not too many much older than me – who keep fasting, *alhamdulillah*. I am certainly not trying to reduce the fact that you might not have been able to fast, if you are one of those who haven't been able to. Just to say to keep the intention that you fast. You don't want to lose the blessings of this holy month. And Allah Swt can and will heal us and find ways for us. Don't resign yourself to not being able to fast. Don't resign yourself to difficulty. If, on the other hand, you can't, then do everything else you can do. Allah Swt may give us a chronic ailment, as some people have. And for that there shouldn't be any guilt, just opportunity to find ways in which you can spend this month next year, *inshā'a-Llāh*.

And though Ramadan leaves us, the blessings and rewards should remain with us. *Inshā'a-llāh* they will. It lies in the realm of our ability to fulfill our duties and our responsibilities, our need to remember Allah swt. Allah says, “**Remember Me and I will remember you.**” One thing we can talk about and reflect upon for the next few days is our commitments and responsibilities, our sincerity, and our loyalties, to Allah, to the Prophet Mohammed (sal), to our brothers and sisters in Islam, to our *shuyukh*, to our community, to our work together, to one another. Allah Swt has provided us, especially those of us in this community, with all of that—not only inner work but outer work to have together—good companionship, good friendship, and people who we can struggle along life’s path with. It’s not something to be taken lightly, or something to be forgotten.

Loyalty to Allah Swt is the easiest, because Allah doesn’t talk back to us in the ways we are used to be talked to. Allah Swt doesn’t avoid us, as other people do. Doesn’t give us problems that we think people give us. Doesn’t demand of us anything that we know right now, just we may know about it later. Then we’ll find out what it is.

To our *shuyukh*, well, we have to say, I’m learning not to talk back, not to argue. I’m learning to come toward. I remember how, for me, important it was for me to go toward my Shaykh, to listen to him, and not to try to criticize in anyway. Then I could really hear what was being told to me. My Shaykh doesn’t talk back anymore. We can selectively read and interpret what we want, and nobody’s going to talk back to us and tell us, “Oh, that interpretation is wrong,” unless you are sitting in a group, and have people who want to argue points with you.

And to each other, well, we can all be pretty intimidating to one other at times. We can cry at the right moment, or look sad at the right moment, be angry at the right moment, be sharp at the right moment, walk off at the right moment, abandon at the

right moment, do what we want to do at the right moment. We think that it is right, but we are not really sure it is right. But as long as we are telling ourselves it is the right moment, then we don't have to worry. No need to worry. We are testifying ourselves to what is right for us. We are not measuring against anyone's advice, necessarily. We are not asking for opinions. So we are safe and secure within our own reality, or illusion, or delusion.

Unless we have fear of Allah swt; unless we have really strong faith, and really sincere love for one another, we are going to think that we all escape the responsibility, the commitment, the loyalty to commitment, the commitment to loyalty—all of that. That's what we are going to do, and it's going to be fine, because no one is going to argue with us. Our good friends will support us, our families will tell us we are doing everything good, and our ego will tell us everything is right. We are going to go on, and do what we do, and we are just going to do it, justifying it to ourselves, keeping ourselves in the company of people who don't talk back, or who don't say, "Yes, but, did you ever think of it this way? Perhaps..."

Maybe that's a real advantage of living in community where people don't stick their noses into your business too much. Maybe people think it's the opposite, but you and I know that it isn't. Maybe the good side of that is we can't escape being responsible for ourselves for so long. As usual, the women in our community always have the extra burden. The women in the Muslim community always have the extra burden. They have to fast extra days. They have to start and they have to stop. They have to take care of the children, usually, and have extra duties in the house. Then, it's their work. Then there is the burden of opportunity to fast the 6 days of Shawwal. Some people take that as a burden instead of a great blessing.

Then we have to make up those days we may have missed, because of illness or traveling. What we are not able to accomplish in the 29 days we fasted, *inshā'a-Llāh*, we can accomplish in those 6 days of the next month, because Allah Swt says that those who fast the six days of Shawwal, it is as if they have fasted another month. What a blessing! And so, pack it in there, if you have anything to make up. Actually, the quote is, ***"a year's fast."*** The Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, ***"Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan and then follows it with six days of Shawwal will attain the fasting equivalent to a year."*** Wow. So in these last days of Ramadan, we have to put our house in order. We have to reflect on ourselves. What did we do? What didn't we do? What decisions did we make? Did we make the right ones? How did we do it? What would I do differently? Do I have the courage to change? Do I have the courage to repent?

I remember I was in Athens, Greece, a number of years ago. My friend Emilios came to visit me. He was the head of the Buddhist community there. I always used to tell Emilios, "You are a Buddhist outwardly, but you are a Sufi at heart." We used to do *dhikr* together in empty buildings on the island of Spetze. The *dhikr* was loud, and four of us would sound like a hundred people. He was a wonderful, wonderful man. I believe he's probably around 85 right now, *inshā'a-Llāh*. I remember we were leaving, and got to the airport. He came with us to the airport, and it turned out our flight was the next day. We had checked out of the hotel. It was 6:00 in the morning. We were at the airport, and somehow, our flight was the next day.

Now, Emilios had things to do. And he and I used to have long, long, long discussions. He was a great man who worked very diligently on the science of consciousness, and we were at conferences together—a wonderful man. We sat up late at night at his home. He had a busy day planned out that day. He had come into Athens to take us to the airport. And I said to him, "You have been such a good

friend. We were up until 2:00 in the morning. You went back to Ekali (about 20 km), got up at 4:00 in the morning and came to bring us to the airport. Now we find out our flight is tomorrow. I know you have a busy day.” He said, “Yes.” I said, “But you are truly a good friend.” He said, “Why do you say that?” I said, “Because you are going to spend the day with me!” With his very bombastic kind of British accent, he said, “Yes! I will do that! I will change everything!” I said, “You know, Emilios, the sign of real love, and real friendship, is when you will change the plan you had made.”

Everything is set up. You have all the reasons why you are going to do what you are going to do. Tomorrow becomes the present day, and you are going to do it; but the need arises, and you can renege. You can change the plan, because you know what is the most important thing. It is that *subhat*, the friendship, that love that is most important. And we did. We spent the day together, and the night together again. We had deeper talks, a lot about this ability to be able to change your schedule, change your decision, change the moment. To grab the moment and understand what it really means, that’s an incredible, incredible, incredible ability. Most of us don’t have the courage to do that. Because once you do that, you think, “Well, did I do the right thing? Did I really make the right decision?” But if you know your heart, if you sit in *muraqabah*, if you understand Qur’an, if you submit and trust, you will know. And nothing in the *dunya* will change your mind—nothing.

This is what we are faced with in the last days of Ramadan, reflecting, and understanding how merciful Allah Swt is. In these last days of Ramadan, we have to put our house in order. We have to complete the recitation of Qur’an, of course, which we are in the process of doing. It doesn’t have to be done at Taraweeh. It’s a convenient way of doing it. We do portions of it, and other people finish it. We spend the year trying to read the Qur’an through at least twice a week if we can, if we have

the people. We have to increase and magnify our kindness and our hospitality, our generosity, *ahlan was sahlán*, to those of you who are here, because this is an extremely, extremely, extremely important thing to do. To understand hospitality is not just having food out. It's not saying, "*Ahlan wa sahlán*." It's not just a nice welcome to people.

We have to understand what these last days of Ramadan mean to us, and mean to Allah Swt. It is to be able to change our minds, to change our schedules, to change our decisions, to get out of the old patterns, to be sure, in our heart, of the decisions we have made, to reflect on ourselves, to put ourselves at the Mercy of Allah Swt. Don't rush into anything. Ramadan has given us this month to slow down and to reflect. We have rushed here and there in our work all year long, in our work in *dunya*, in our work in the community. Rushing here, country to country, work to work, people to people, it wears you down. It gets you tired. It's a good tired. It's a serviceful tired, but it's a wonderful opportunity.

Ramadan comes, and the brakes don't just go on, on the first day of Ramadan, because programs continue. The summer camp is now in the cycle of Ramadan. We've had over a hundred-some young people from different countries here this year. We've had so many challenges. We have had the TechGirl program in Washington, and other programs, and grants to write. That's just us. What about you? The brakes don't just slam on. You have to slow down, and reflect and ask yourself the questions.

We pay our general zakat. You should have paid the *zakat al fitr*. That's going to happen, our children will go do that this Monday I think. We have to try our best to observe and find the Laylatul Qadr, which I hope we did, or will, or have. Abdul Qadir Jilani (ra) said he never missed one. And on the Eid, we will have the

opportunity to distribute some gifts, and probably a lot of chocolates and things. Some people will make *itikaf*.. Some prefer to go a step further by making *dhikru-Llāh* and *tasbih* on a regular basis. We need to prepare our hearts for the celebration that comes, for the guests that are joining us this weekend, and for the love that will surround us for at least these hours and these days. Fasting, reading Qur'an, contemplation of this month really has to be accompanied by some other things, though. One of which is the importance of remembering Allah Swt, *dhikru-Llāh*. For those of you who heard my talks in Charlottesville about the derivation and morphology of the word, you understand why we say, *dhikru-Llāh* is penetrating you.

We are really at a very incredible period in human history. It doesn't do me any good to repeat over and over again what that's all about. You know what it is technologically, environmentally, genocides, humanly, inhumanly, personally, economically, socially, morally, ethically. We live in a world that is very, very hungry; a world that is very, very ill; a world that is very much in need. That's why fasting is that much more important. Everything is consumed and consuming. We live in a world where it has become easier and easier to forget, because we all have to support our other forgetful people to help you forget, harder and harder to become spiritually involved. We become very impatient. We jump at opportunities. We become opportunistic, even spiritually opportunistic. We don't want to miss something: we jump. We lack patience. And Allah Swt says, **"Innallaha ma'a saberin. Innallaha yuhibbus saberin."** Why don't we hear that message?

It's harder and harder to stand up and say, "I'm a Muslim." It's harder to trust in Allah when you have difficulties, because the world makes it very easy, and the people around us make it easy to set aside that trust. After all, Allah will always be with us when we need Him / Her / It. So I can decide to do what I'm going to do

now; and when I need Allah, I will turn to Allah Swt—when I’m sick, when I have a difficult decision, when some pain comes to me. The way people relate to this world is pretty disastrous. We are all affected by it, and we all relate to the world and others in some similar way, even if we don’t see it. Not that we stand in judgment, but we have to use good judgment about who we associate with. I spoke about it the other night to the people here, when I was going into the teachings of the Khwaja Khwajagan. What is really the meaning of *suhbat*, and who are the people to associate with? How do we act, and why; what do we work at, and for what purpose do we work; who benefits from the work, and why do I benefit; and who do we serve, and why we serve, and all that. The Qur’an gives us the best guidelines for that. The Prophet (sal) gives us the best guidelines for that. But then, we have to be in the company of the noble truth. We have to keep that light with us. To be in community and *suhbat* is a great and incredible blessing.

What we are asked to remember out of all of this is not just the technical information, or how to recite Qur’an, and how to do our prayers exactly correctly. That’s important, of course, but what we have to remember is the truth, our attachment to the truth, until our concerns leave us, and our fears leave us, except for the fear of Allah Swt. The fear of Allah, *taqwa*, means piety. Then we will be safe, and then we will find security in the embrace of Allah Swt and those who love Allah Swt. I don’t think that there is a time more important in the world than now, to be in the company of Allah, and to be in the company of people who love Allah Swt, and who love and serve Allah for Allah’s sake. Anything else will drive us down a pit that is ugly and terrible.

The time will come when what is happening in other parts of the world, like in Africa and North Africa and the Middle East now, in Syria, will happen here perhaps. And we will say, “Woe unto me! I remember when things used to be okay and good.”

And the person next to you who says they are your friend, will be your enemy; and the person who says they love you will hate you. The person you think will grant you freedom will imprison you; and the people who surround you will try to change you. On the other hand, living in this strange *barzakh* between the repetitive kind of human self-destruction, and the hope for a better future gives us an opportunity to increase our faith / *iman*. The forces that are acting on us socially and politically and religiously, attenuated by technology allow us to hear all kinds of things, too fast, indigestible, with no idea whether it's true or real, because no one has to be accountable any more. Everybody is a reporter; no one has to verify their stories.

It can act in a way to make us more aware, if we approach it in that light, but we have to admit that most of us have neglected our relationship with Allah Swt. We have abandoned something very important, which is our ability to find real peace of mind. That's because real peace of mind comes with real peace of heart, and real peace of heart comes with humility. Humility can only come when there's gratitude. Gratitude can only come when a person is humble. It's circular. We have to find that place again, or even if it's for the first time in our life.

Living in the material world is very difficult. We know that spiritual, and we should try very hard to hold fast to the rope of Allah Swt. The loss of peace of mind, of peace of heart, the loss of the loved ones are all lessons for us, lessons in tranquility, lessons in faith, lessons in love. The only way we can really deal with this is to remember who we are, where we are, who we are with, why we are who we are, and where we are, and where Allah has placed us, and stop trying to change it as opportunists. **“Those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah; without a doubt, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.”** So we have to think about remembering Allah Swt, and we have to make our life an example of that remembrance. Until we get to that

point, by the guidance of Allah Swt, through the light of the Prophet Mohammed (sal), and through the nearness and closeness to our *shaykh* and the *shuyukh*, we have to glorify Allah in the morning and the night, and have that belief, without which we will surely be of the lost.

What does it mean to be a trustworthy believer? Maybe we'll get some hint in the next two days I hope, *inshā'a-llāh*. But at least we should try to act in the best way in our character, in the name of peace, in the name of freedom, in the name of trust and loyalty, in the name of love, to try to act as good friends, good children, good parents, good brothers, good sisters, good *murīds*. Try to do the best we can to be active in the lives of those whom we love, those who allow us to bring them that good tiding, the *bushra*. Spiritually, it is to remember Allah, to remember Allah, to remember Allah, to remember Allah loudly at times, quietly at times—sincerely all the time, deeply.

I don't think it's inappropriate to quote others, especially Prophet Isa (as) who said, "*Let those who are without sin cast the first stone,*" as reported in the Injil. It means we should be very, very careful not to blame. At the same time, we should not hold back from giving good guidance and giving advice for those who we love and care about. But then, most of us don't give permission for that. We may give it verbally, but we don't really want it. We don't really want to know, "What do you think about what I said, or what I did, or what I'm doing, or how I'm acting." We really, really, most of us don't want to know, because we already know. If you don't want to know, if you are hesitant, then you already know.

Now we come through Ramadan, and we are all purified, *inshā'a-llāh*. And this is the final *khutbah* of the month. Allah Swt promised us that this is a time when our sins will be forgiven, and they are not going to be counted if we were sincere in our

efforts. The doors of hell have been closed. The angels will greet us on the road at the Eid as they do every year at the crossroads, sitting on the fences, hanging on the trees maybe, clapping and praising us. We can't hear them, but they are there doing that. Some of them hang out right up here in the light (points). See the face? How many of us will walk down the road humbly and ashamed that we could have done better, and grateful to Allah, because Allah is merciful and compassionate. That's the reason why we should try better, not feel that everything is going to be okay.

Asalaamu aleykum.