

July 17, 2009

Khutbah

Title: [The Importance of Good Deeds](#)

DVD title: The Measure of Every Muslim is in His Good Deeds

(Opening du'ās.) My dear brothers and sisters, I will continue with what I have been speaking about, in light of the work we do. We should remember Sūratu-l-Asr:

I swear by what remains of time that truly the human being is at a loss, except for those who faithfully believe and perform good deeds and counsel one another to the truth, and counsel one another to a steadfast patience. (103: 1-3)

This is one of the best of messages for the times we live in, because Islam teaches us that real peace cannot be attained without patience and without justice, and without a sense of understanding our position with regard to the rest of humanity. We have dedicated 30 years of our lives for that, in our work, and in our hope for the future. We are always reminded of that in the summer time when we have among us new people and young people who have ideals that are resonant and consistent with ours, through whatever religion they are, or none. But something in a belief system has brought us all together. We believe what has brought us together is the Haqq, which is the truth that is Allah Swt. It is the *fitrah*, the goodness that is in the human being.

So long as there is oppression in this world where the rights of people are violated, justice is denied, and people find themselves oppressed, then we can't find a means for peace with the unjust, until we find a common bond and a common goal in the hearts of people.

Author: Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid

www.circlegroup.org

In the hearts of people, people find rest in the remembrance of Allah Swt. Many of our brothers and sisters in Islam believe that to mean just remembering Allah's Name. That's true, of course, but we have to go a little further and understand that remembrance of Allah Swt is [in] those attributes and qualities. Remembrance of Allah Swt is to bring forward compassion and mercy in our life; our sense of peace and justice, what is good and right for all humanity, and for all of the children of Adam (as). Allah Swt reminds us in Sūratu-l-Asr that without good deeds, this is impossible. Human beings have to act. We have been created to act, not to just sit somewhere and somehow absorb the truth and go through some period of life. We have to do good deeds and be firmly established in the truth, and be steadfast in the truth, and in our actions and good deeds.

Sometimes we find in people in the world today a great desire to appear secular and very materialistic, and "modern." They don't understand that modernity is an opportunity for *tajdīd*/renewal. We truly do live at a time of renewal. In truth - and I hope we have been representing the truth - renewal is constant all the time. The tendency for renewal is all the time, but we have to focus on that renewal. We have to remember that we are not just made of flesh and blood, or of material things, but there are the immaterial, the spiritual elements like our soul, *ruh*, our spirit, self, *nafs*. Sometimes we swing from one side to another, even within moments: anger to happiness, fear to courage, doubt to belief. We can swing between these two things in seconds. We could say that all humanity is somewhat bipolar and does that because we are basically created as schizophrenic. Or, we can say that this is an opportunity. Allah Swt has created us in this system to be able to be responsive to what is good, and to let go of our attachment to limited ideas of ourselves and limited attitudes.

We find that people periodically get tired of tyranny and oppression. This is what is

happening in Iran this very day, today. Whether people believe or don't believe there's any hope in that situation, of course there is hope. People are people, and human beings cannot suffer under oppression for any long period of time. They climb up the ladder. Remember that Islam is not based on the idea that one becomes "united" with Allah Swt. But one climbs the ladder/*miraj* to Allah Swt. We go rung by rung. If in Iran today the rung is "throw out Ahmedinajad for Rafsanjani," it is still rung by rung, until one achieves the level where people have affirmed what is right and what is good. How do you do that? By doing good deeds and remembering Allah Swt. You remember Allah Swt by being able to recognize that Divine Presence. You lift the veils and burdens of oppression, so people can see the beauty in their own nature and in the nature of others, so that they can have faith and trust in the *dīn* of Islam, instead of having it always interpreted by someone set above them, saying, "This is what that means," and "that is what this means," and "this is *bida*" and "this is not *bida*." People forget *bida hasana*. When people get tired of tyranny, they overthrow it and hopefully get support from their human brothers and sisters, not just from the Muslim brothers and sisters.

We were at the airport the other day, coming back. I'm ashamed I didn't act first. There was an elderly woman, probably Moroccan. She was confused and tried to get through the gate a couple of times. Finally, a Christian couple came up to her. I'm really ashamed I didn't act first, may Allah forgive me for it. After she tried going to the gate and being turned back, this couple took her and said, "Come stand with us." Why? Because compassion and humanitarian feeling runs in everyone. The rest of us are carried away with our own selves. We had been traveling a long time; we were tired. Things looked okay. *Astaghfirullah*. We have this zealotry. When turned in the wrong direction, we forget the real science, and substitute materialistic mentality for faith. We substitute our own anxieties and fears for *taqwa*/piety. Then we allow tyranny to take place, the tyranny of the powerful over the weak, the exploitation of the few. People

want to control others through power and policy. All you have to do is go to Washington and stand in Congress to hear all the excuses for all the bad and oppressive mentalities.

There is no question we need an ideology. It is natural and harmonious. People seek harmony and social company. They try to come to some understanding of how they all fit together. What we have to understand and promote is a balanced society, inwardly and outwardly. [You have] to understand that if you really embrace the *taslim* of Islam, the concept of security and peace, [you will] understand that within Islam there are answers to every question you could ask. For the people of Tariqah, there is the HOV lane I was talking about last night. HOV lane goes in the same direction, is made out of the same material, but once you are on it, you can't get off until Seminary road or Springfield. You get there faster, though. That HOV lane has to have a least two people in the car. If you like, you can say the Divine Presence and yourself, or you can say the *shaykh* and yourself, but you have to have at least two in the car.

The ideal that Islam has been promoting for the last 1400 years is a universal, just message. Don't forget that Rasūlallah (sal) said that he existed before Adam (as). The light, the *Nūr* of Allah Swt has been promoted for far longer. The pursuit of this message, the pursuit of the living of the mission of Rasūlallah (sal) is a pursuit of the essence of goodness. It's not about philosophy, or just about rituals or laws. Those are the things that make it practicable. Those are things that manifest something that is very, very essential, very quiet, that we are hardwired to: compassion, mercy, trust, love, peacefulness, balance. These are the ways in which they are manifest. The message is not limited; and because this *dīn* does not limit its message, it means that it is for everyone.

The carriers of the Divine Message, the *ambiyā*, form one brotherhood and Muslims don't make any distinction between any of them, whether it's Sidna Ibrahim (as), Sidna Musa

(as), Sidna Daoud (sal), or Sidna Isa (as). No distinction is made between them. Allah, Who we ask for forgiveness and rely on, hopefully in the opening of every prayer (not just *jumah* prayer), is that Divine Presence that just comes and manifests in us in opportunity after opportunity, every day. I suspect that if we really honestly ask ourselves, every one of us has a reason for some degree of repentance even in the last 2 hours of our lives. There is some opportunity we missed, like me at the airport; some reason to say *astaghfirullah* without guilt but with sincerity. A touch of guilt is not bad; it gives flavor to life..

We have been instructed by Allah Swt in how to treat our parents, our neighbors, the orphan, the poor, the oppressed; how to guide ourselves in this work; how to be good human beings to one another; how to worship properly; how to worship improperly. All this guidance is there, but it takes attention. It's not about worshipping God somewhere up there or far off, and if we don't do it, lightning bolts will come and strike us. You can find that metaphor in Torah. It's not about having to create a new religion named after a man. You can find that in the Injil.

The Prophet Mohammed (sal) said, "I did not come to create a new religion, but for the benefit and upliftment, for the establishment and extension of the character of the human being." What does that mean? It means it gives us an opportunity to refine ourselves. It is an extremely non-paternalistic, non-patronizing *dīn*. *Wa'alahi*, how Muslims have confused and distorted it is a terrible situation. All you have to do is look around the Muslim world and go searching for Islam. You know the statement: "*I traveled the world and met many Muslims, and found little Islam. I traveled the world and found Islam, but few Muslims.*" We stand in a different place, *insh'allah*. But we also stand in the same place. Unless we make the effort, we become complacent.

We can become complacent in the freedom of this community, or in the good works that we do, and turn away from our own personal relationships with one another. If someone is sick, everyone runs to help the sick—no question. You will find few people in the world like the people here. When someone is in need, they reach into their pocket and take their last few pennies out. *Alhamdulillah*, these are all signs of good Muslims. But how do you treat yourself? Do you think of yourself as a Muslim, as a person of Tariqah? Do you think of yourself as a person who is an extension of the will of Allah Swt, who said, **“I will speak through your lips, walk through your feet, work through your hands.”** Do we believe that? Do we believe that what we are doing is an extension of the will of Allah Swt? And if it is so, and we do believe that, we must feel a lot of humility and unworthiness.

If someone comes and says, “Bakruddin, I’m giving you the Nobel prize tomorrow,” you’d feel very humbled. “Me? The Nobel prize? Why me?” And if Allah works through our hands, what does it mean? It means that compassion, mercy, love, and understanding, care and concern, protection – all those Ninety-Nine Beautiful Attributes of Allah – are available to us and we are conscious of it. Every second, every second, something comes out of our mouth, in our mind and heart, and motivates our hands to reach out to someone, and our feet to move in a direction, and our thoughts to go in a certain way. We know we are in attunement and in resonance. There is harmony with Allah Swt. That is something worthwhile to strive for.

When we try to follow the guidance and instructions of Qur’an, we should remember that we are not trying to follow the instructions and guidance of some god off somewhere wearing a thobe of a certain length. But we are following what is natural to us, our *fitrah*. We have lifted veils. We have removed the *hijab*. Even the metaphor works for you ladies who are *muhajib*. Where do you remove the veil? You remove it in the company

of your family, the nearest and dearest to you. Otherwise, you wear it. If you are *muhajib*, that's the belief. So too, Allah Swt lifts the veil when we are near to Allah Swt, when we are in the family; when we belong, and understand where we belong. When we are in the company of the Divine Presence, there need to be no veils, nothing to be covered. Everything is revealed.

What is it called when Prophet Mohammed was on the mountain? A revelation. What is revealed? What is right there, always there, that we are not seeing. Allah Swt is seen and unseen. It depends on us. We go outside and see the beauty of nature. We had a wonderful rain today. My car got flooded because the back window was left open... We see all the beauty of nature. The water that feeds the plants floods the car. It's the same water, *alhamdulillah!* If you can say *alhamdulillah* to it, fine. If you say, "Arrrggghh!" It's not so fine. [There is] opportunity after opportunity in the beauty of nature. We walk outside and get involved in a conversation, and we miss the beauty of nature. But we are not supposed to be walking around all the time like the goofy Soofis. Still, it's always nice to see the background.

Those of you who do photography know about depth of field. If you have it set right, you are in focus from right close to the background. It's good to have the depth of field: you are seeing the beauty while you are having the conversation. You are not forgetting the beauty. You are not forgetting the values, the opportunities, the blessings. You are not forgetting why you are, where you are, having the conversation you are having, doing the work you are doing. You don't forget. That's the goal of the people of Tariqah. It should be the goal of every Muslim. The goal of every Muslim is not just to memorize Qur'an. Plenty of people can recite Qur'an. Some of those people who are out there blowing themselves up, which is totally *haram*, can recite Qur'an. If to be a perfectly good person was the ability to recite Qur'an, we'd have no extremism, nobody killing

themselves and other people. They would not be breaking every other law. That can't be the measure.

The measure is told to us in Sūratu-l-Asr: **“To remember Allah and do good deeds.”** Allah Swt doesn't demand of us good deeds so Allah Swt can stay Allah Swt. But we can't be believers unless we do good deeds. We can't be humane human beings, unless we do good deeds. What are good deeds? Recognizable by anybody. It's true. Good deeds are recognizable. A good deed [can last] for one second, but the memory of it can last a lifetime. Just think: you are walking along and someone pushes you down to the ground. “What the heck did you push me for?” They say, “There was a rattlesnake you were about to step on.” You remember that your whole life: one little push in one second. Or someone gives you good advice right at the right time. You'll get to be my age, 103, and look back and say, “When I was 14 years old, this person told me this and it stuck with me my whole life.” How long did it take to say it? One second. Right time, right place: *zaman, maqam*.

Do you know when the right time and right place are? Now; it is always now. All the study, all the recitation, all the memorization and knowledge is just to become aware, now. It is not to get you all stuck over here in the world of *fiqh*, the world of *ulūm*, or the world of *hudud*. Those are all useable tools, but you are not supposed to live over there. You are supposed to live right here. I don't like to use the word supposed. But [we are] encouraged or admonished to do good deeds and remember Allah. Remember Allah when? When you are sitting, standing, or lying on your side. What does that leave? I guess, hanging upside down in the air, but not many people can achieve that. That's *karamat*, and a whole other system.

We can be zealots, okay, but zealots to preserve the awareness of that Divine Presence,

not zealots to push a message on someone. From the day the Qur'an was revealed to Rasulallah (sal), people memorized it. There has never been any scarcity of Muslims memorizing Qur'an. Because of that, it has retained its purity. It is the most read and memorized book in the history of humanity in its original language. Yet at the same time, Allah is telling us that the *rahmat*/mercy, the '*adl*, the *ihsan*, the *maruf* are the thrust of Islam. That is lived through your life, not just spoken from your tongue.

Any interpretation of Qur'an, or the life of Rasulallah (sal) or the Sunnah has to include people. It has to pay attention to when it was said, the period of time, and where it was said. That takes us recursively back to *tajdīd*. We especially live now at a time of need for renewal, that we can see when we look at the world. One of the best ways to renew Islam, to renew people's hearts and trust in this world, whether they call themselves Muslims or not, is to remember and to practice good deeds. Abu Hurayra (ra) gives this Hadith.

We were sitting around the Messenger of Allah (sal). Abu Bakr and Umar were also there among the audience. In the meanwhile, the Messenger of Allah (sal) rose and left us, and delayed in coming back to us, which caused us anxiety that he might have been attacked by some enemy when we weren't with him to protect him. So being alarmed, we rose. I was the first to be alarmed, and I went out to look for the Messenger (sal). I came to a garden belonging to the Bani wal Najar, a section of the Ansar. I went around it looking for a gate, but failed to find one. Seeing a streamlet flowing into the garden, I crouched like a fox and slunk into the place where the Messenger (sal) was.

He said, "Is it Abu Hurayra?" I replied, "Yes, Messenger of Allah."

He (sal) said, “What is the matter with you?” I replied, “You were among us, but you rose and went away and delayed for some time. I was afraid that you might be attacked by some enemy when we weren’t with you to protect you. We became afraid, and I was the first to be afraid, so I ran out into the garden to look for you. I crouched as a fox does and these people are following me.” He addressed me as Abu Hurayra and gave me some sandals and said, “Take away these sandals of mine, and when you meet anyone outside of this garden who testifies that there is no God but Allah, and is assured of it in his heart, gladden him by announcing that he shall go to paradise.” The first one I met was Hazrat Umar (as). He asked, “What are these sandals, Abu Hurayra?” I replied, “These are the sandals of the Messenger of Allah (sal), with which he sent me to gladden anyone I meet who testifies “Ashadu enla illaha il’Allah, ashadu anna Mohammedan Rasulallah,” being assured of it in his heart, with the announcement that he will go to paradise.”

Umar (as) struck me on the breast and I fell back. He said, “Go back, Abu Hurayra!” So I went back to the Messenger of Allah (sal), and I was about to burst into tears. Umar (as) followed close behind me. The Messenger (sal) said, “What is the matter with you, Abu Hurayra?” I said, “I happened to meet Umar (as) and conveyed to him the message with which you sent me, and he struck me on my breast, which made me fall down upon my back, and ordered me to go back.” Upon this, the Messenger (sal) said, “What prompted you do to this, Umar?” He said, “O Messenger of Allah, my mother and father be sacrificed to you. Did you send Abu Hurayra to gladden anyone who testifies that

there is no God but Allah, and being assured of that in his heart, with the tidings that he will go to paradise?” He (sal) said, “Yes, Umar.” Umar said, “Please do not do it, for I am afraid people will trust in it alone. Let them go on doing good deeds.” And the Messenger of Allah (sal) said, “Well, then let them.”

Such is the importance of the work you are all doing, *insh'allah. Asalaamu aleikum.*

SECOND KHUTBAH Du'ās.