

August 21, 2009

Khutbah

Title: [Ramadān - The Month of Perseverance](#)

DVD title: A Month of Sabr (Perseverance and Patience)
and A Month of Sympathy

Opening Prayers. *Asalām aleikum*. Allah (Swt) ends Suratu-l-Imrān by saying:

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. (3:200)

My brothers and sisters, today to understand how to become secure in your belief and to endure has a special meaning for us because we have a month to practice it. It is very important for us to make the best of this month that has come before us. Sometimes we make the best of it by seeing our faults, and sometimes we make the best of it by understanding our strengths. Sometimes we make the best of it by catching ourselves doing something that is not quite right and sometimes we find we make the best of it by seeing that we are doing good things.

We don't differentiate between the two. It is the seeing, seeing with the eye of the seer - *basīr*. This is what is important.

Allah reminds us in Suratu-l-Zumar:

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Say, “O my worshipers who believe, be conscious of your Lord and ward off evil from within and without. For those who excel in good deeds in this world, there is a best of goodness. And the earth of Allah is spacious. Truly those who are steadfast and patient will be rewarded without an accounting.”
(39:10)

He follows up by saying:

Say, “Truly I am commanded to worship Allah making my religious way of life sincere for him. And I am commanded to be the first among those who are willingly surrendered to Allah.” (39:11-12)

Well, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the month for that. Sometimes I feel, when I am standing here during *khutbah*, that it should be (and of course it is) sufficient to just quote and walk away, because this is the message of today’s *dars*. The month of Ramadān is upon us after sunset tonight. *Al-hamdullilah*. Whether we make the calculations one way or the other way, the calculation is made in our heart.

It has been a very interesting Rajab and Sha’bān, as always. Many things have happened for us during the months of Rajab and Sha’bān. We have been very busy. We had many opportunities to be distracted and we had many opportunities to serve. We had many opportunities to be among young Muslims and believers, and among people who are not Muslim. We had many opportunities to give good messages, and to watch ourselves as we served. Now, the month of Ramadān is upon us for reflection. We ask Allah (Swt) to

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remind us what the Prophet Mohammed (sal) said on the last day of Sha'bān. The virtues of Ramadān he required of us to understand. The Prophet Mohammed (sal) said on the last day of Sha'bān: ***“O people! There comes upon you now a great month, a most blessed month in which lies a night which is greater and worth more than 1,000 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 (SwT) by performing any virtuous deeds during this month, any virtuous deeds for him or her shall be a reward as if he or she has performed a prescribed act of worship at any other time of year. Whoever performs a prescribed act of worship for Allah (SwT), for him will be a reward of 70 prescribed acts of worship as in any other time of year. This is indeed a month of patience. And the true reward for patience is Paradise. It is a month of sympathy with one’s fellow human beings. It is a month in which true believer’s provisions are increased. Whosoever feeds a person performing the prescribed fast in order to end the fast at sunset, for him or her there should 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 at its least.” Thereupon we said, “O Messenger of Allah, none of us possess the means whereby we can provide enough for the prescribed fasting person to break the prescribed fast.” The Messenger (sal) said, “God grants the same reward 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.”***

Again, we could have given a *khutbah* by repeating what the Prophet (sal) said. I have encouraged you to invite one another to each other’s homes, not just during Ramadān. I don’t want it to be organized by the organization. I don’t want it to be anything but active

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worship from you, from your own heart. You see, what Allah Swt says through the mouth of the Prophet Mohammed (sal) what the reward is: one virtuous deed is equal to one *fard* prayer, and one prescribed act of worship is equal to 70 in a month of sympathy. A month of sympathy. Sympathy. Sympathy. Sympathy. Say it. (Congregation says the word sympathy). Sympathy. When was the last time you used the word sympathy? Was it yesterday? When somebody dies, you say, “I extend my condolences. My sympathy goes out to you.”

This is a month of sympathies. A month has—how many minutes, how many seconds did we calculate—a month of sympathy. If I had said it was a month of air, that would have been easy. Air is there all the time. A month of water? Water is around all the time. A month of sympathy? Ho ho. I’m shivering in my bare feet at the standard I am setting for myself for this month by repeating the standard that was told by Prophet Mohammed (sal). I would be taking the test by my own self and maybe by others. You never know. I might be reminded. “You shouldn’t say that. This is Ramadān.” Scary. Don’t breathe for two minutes.

“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 tonight?” “Ah. I’m a little tired.” “I would rather hold onto my sins for another day.” “I will take my chances. I will have somebody over tomorrow. I will live until tomorrow.” You know, famous Arabic term: “Manana.” “Let’s invite somebody over for dinner tonight.” “Tomorrow is a better day for me.” *Al-hamdullah*. Do you remember Ya Yudistera, that story I used to tell? You know you are going to live until the next day. *Al-hamdullilah*. Of course there are exigencies. Of course there are circumstances, but cut back on them, because the energy you don’t have,
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you might get. The health you don't have, you might find. The upset you have, you might get over. The conversation you have, you might never have. The knowledge you might have gained, you might not have gained. And the happiness you would have brought to somebody, you might never have brought to them.

And it is a month of sacrifice. So make that little sacrifice, then continue it. Prophet Mohammed (sal), also said:

In this month there are four things that you should endeavor to perform in great number. Two shall be to please your Lord, while 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-shadu an laha illallah, wa ash-shadu anna Muhammad Rasool-Allah.'"

So let us begin now: *Ash-shadu an laha illallah, wa ash-shadu anna Muhammad Rasool-Allah*. I hope you all did it, not just in your brain, but on your tongue. There is a difference that goes through your brain and your tongue, as you well know. Because sometimes something goes through your brain that comes out on your tongue that shouldn't have, and sometimes something comes out on your tongue that is not in your brain. So it is nice to get the harmony between the two. Let us try it again for those of you who didn't say it aloud because you are embarrassed that somebody might hear you. *Ash-shadu an laha illallah, wa ash-shadu anna Muhammad Rasool-Allah*. That is very good. Still some didn't.

"To beg God's forgiveness for your wrongdoings." That is the second one: repeat the
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Shahadah and beg God’s forgiveness. ***“For those without which you cannot make do, you should beg Allah for entry into Paradise and seek refuge with Allah. And whomsoever gave water to drink to a person who had performed the prescribed fast, Allah (Swt) shall grant them a drink from my fountain.”***

How many of you serve water to people on the night when we make *iftār* here in the mosque? How many of you serve water at home if somebody comes over to eat? Is there a chance you might serve water? What did Allah Swt say? What does the Prophet (sal) say? Whoever served or ***“gave water to a person who has performed the prescribed fast, Allah shall give them a drink from my fountain. Such a drink that they will never feel again thirsty until they enter Paradise.”*** So when I am sitting at my house, I have to remember not to say, “Ya, Sabreen. Will you get so and so some water who is coming over for dinner?” We should race to the spiket to see who is going to get a drink from the fountain. Is this just hagiographic silliness? What if it is right? Just entertain the idea that even if just the attitude just changes you. “Would you like some water?”

In Holy Qur’an, we read that Allah (Swt) said that the month of Ramadān is coming. This month is a month of *sabr*. *Sabr* means what? Perseverance. I like to think of Ramadān always in terms of perseverance. *Sabr* means patience, but perseverance is a good way to think of it in the month of Ramadān—to persevere. People’s tendencies tend to rise to the surface at this time, agitation. Some people find illness. Some people focus on their weaknesses. Some people see their *nafs ammāra* rise—let us say our sensitivities. We carry around anxieties; we carry around fears and we carry around worries; we carry around apprehensions and memories, things that perhaps we hold too close to us sometimes, and we don’t know how to let go of. So Allah (Swt) is going help us let go of our sensitivities, our weaknesses, our tendencies, our illnesses. He/She/It/The
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System is going to help us do that. When you get into the system that is Allah (Swt) resonant with Ramadān, things get better. Why? Apriori, you are in resonance. You are in harmony. Think of it that way.

It is fine that you want to hold your hands up when you pray as if Allah Swt is in the sky somewhere. That is fine. That is tradition and you might want to do that. But Allah Swt is not in the sky. Allah is a perfectly balanced system, is perfectly harmonious sounds, is perfectly beautiful reality. Why is Jannah described the way Jannah is described? Because it is harmonious and it is beautiful and it balanced. It may look like that or may not look like that from the eyes of their soul. The point is that it is consistent. It is balanced. Everything is beautiful to people who are beautiful. The rivers are beautiful, the sky is beautiful, the trees are beautiful, the fruits are beautiful, everything tastes beautiful. Nothing rots. Nothing pollutes. Nothing dies. Nothing gets old. Nothing gets young. That is in the resonance. That is the harmony. Everything is in harmony. It is another way of saying that Jannah is *mīzān*/balance. Why is Jahannam described the way it is? Because it is imbalance. Things die. They are consumed. People are not happy. They are unhappy. They scream. They yell. Problems come again and again. You live, you die. You live, you die—over and over and over again. This is hell: disbalance, lack of resonance, lack of harmony.

So we want to be sensitive to the Divine Presence and sensitive to the teachings of Rasūl-e-Allah (sal), and sensitive to the goodness in people, and sensitive to the people around us, and sensitive to the hope in our souls, and sensitive to the *fitra* that we were given when we were born, but not overly sensitive to the illnesses and the doubts and the weaknesses and all of that. Allah will help us do that. Does that mean that all your illnesses will disappear at sunset tonight? Well, *Insh'Allah*, but probably not. We all do

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know, because science has taught us that your mental attitude has an affect on your body. So at least, let us have the right attitude. It is the month of perseverance/*sabr*. It is also the month of ar-Rahmat. It is also the month of al-Adl. It is a shame what happens sometimes that people harm each other.

We know that Allah has said: **“Come towards Me and I will come running towards you.”** He tells us: **“They love Me and I love them.”** In other words, we have to get to a place in our life where even though Ramadān is coming to us tonight, we are coming faster to Ramadān. “Oh. Ramadān is coming. I have five more hours in which I can eat. I can drink another drink.” Run to Ramadān. Moving towards Ramadān. We must come to a place in our lives where we don’t wait for Allah Swt to come to us, but we seek the critical need to move toward Allah Swt. “I’m coming!” No. Allah Swt is present. It just means turning your face, turning your attention towards Allah Swt. Turn towards good. Turn towards compassion. Turn towards patience. Turn towards love. Turn towards justice. Turn towards peace. Turn towards perseverance. Turn towards majesty. Turn towards beauty. Turn towards greatness. Ninety-nine turns.

Allah is present. We have to get to the point in our life where perseverance is not something we have to struggle with but something that we embrace and we love, and we miss it when we don’t have it. We have to get to a point in our lives where what we need for our stability, for our hearts is to be open to our capacity for our duties, and to the ability to perform our duties and responsibilities, to love one another, to serve one another is so important to us that Allah Swt, Who is always present, Whose Names are always active around us, Whose Attributes are always with us, just responds, like the pond responds to the pebble thrown into it.

We know how to respond. We respond to things all the time. “Why did you look at me like that?” “What did you mean by that?” “Did you just eat garlic?” Hm. “Was that you?” “What did you say?” We respond all the time. Why don’t we respond to the Divine Presence? We can—all of us. We must strive to do that. But it is not only that we have to respond, we have to also initiate, because Allah Swt says, **“They love Me and I love them.”** Not “I love them and they love Me.” **“They love Me and I love them.”** So we initiate and Allah Swt responds. We know *that* is even better, because we know that when somebody shows appreciation for us, it is better than the thing you did. You do something and someone says, “Oh. Thank you! That is exactly what I needed to hear,” or “exactly what I wanted to get,” or “you are so considerate.” We feel better than the act we did itself.

To have the response of Allah Swt is wonderful. It seems to be the opposite of what prayer is. In most religions, prayer is you sit there and you ask God for something. You pray and you ask God, and God is supposed to hear. “Oh God, give me this and give me that. Give me this and give me that.” It is more like diving into the ocean, more like we have to recognize that the answer is already present, the response is already there, the healing is already there, the love is already there, the courage is already there, the patience is already there, the perseverance is already there and we have to form the right appeal so that they match, so that they are in harmony, so they are in resonance. That is why the beautiful *du’ā* is so beautiful. You heard Dr. Nawab last night reciting a beautiful *du’ā*. He recites that *du’ā* very beautifully. I don’t know if you recognized it. In the moment that he is reciting the *du’ā*, his heart, I am sure, is filled because Allah is responding.

This is the month of perseverance; therefore, it is a month of opportunity. Prophet

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Mohammed (sal) informed us that this month has many blessings in it, many benefits. Mercy, guidance, peace: these are some of the blessings. The doors to Paradise are open. The doors to hell are closed, and the revelation of Qu'an is given to us in this month. Happiness, rejoicing, forgiveness (which of course necessitates something before forgiveness, repenting), and repenting are part of this month, [as well as] patience, and sharing our daily life with those whom you want to share it with—whom you love and who love you, whom you respect and who respect you, whom you are responsible for and for strangers also.

As far as Ramadan is the month of perseverance and patience, it is joined by many other qualities. Suleyman Farsi (ra) narrated that the Prophet of Allah Swt (sal), Mohammed, gave a sermon on the last day of Sha'bān. I read the last part of that to you. Remember what he said? He said, ***“O people! A great and blessed month is approaching. And there is Ramadan, the month of sabr. And the reward of sabr is Jannah.”*** Yes, there are difficulties and there are trials and Allah (Swt) said, ***“Did you think that I would try you only one time?”*** (9:16) It is not that you will have 100 different trials. It may be that you have 100 different versions of exactly the same trial. “Don’t talk so much.” “Don’t over think.” “Don’t worry so much.” “Don’t have too much fear.” “Watch what you say.” “Watch your mind.” Maybe [it is] the same thing, [only] 100 different versions. Maybe the second time it comes and it passes, you say, “Ah. It is another trial coming.” Everything is okay.

Allah is not saying that it is October or whatever the 12th, 1944 and you know, this is what happened then and now it is happening again. It is now August the 21st, 2009, and whatever Allah gives me today, this is my test and my trial. What happened in 1942 or 1948 or 1960, 1970, or ‘85 or ‘90, ‘92, or ‘97, ‘99, 2001, 2002 happened then. Now we

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can deal with the month of Ramadān. We can try to let go of those worries, those attitudes, that history and those conditionings. We have to try and let go of it. If we see those things repeating again, we ask Allah Swt, “O Allah. Relieve the burden from me.” or “Relieve the burden from the people.” Because every time you dwell on the past too long, you are bringing the past into the present. And whatever is happening in the present is heavy enough. Why would we want to bring the weight of the past there too?

This idea of perseverance is mentioned 103 times in the Qur’an, in 25 different forms and in 46 different *sūrah*s. Because of its importance, it has been mentioned that many times. It is not because Allah (Swt) couldn’t think of another word or something else to say, but because this is the message for eternity. People are always going to have to deal with patience and perseverance—always. How many times a name of a battle is mentioned? One or two times. Why? Because it is historical. It is going to pass. Patience and perseverance is not going to pass. The reality of what it takes to be a human being at peace with themselves and at peace with Allah Swt is based on our perseverance. Patience and perseverance have a major role in our life. Therefore it has a major role in Qur’an; therefore, we have to concentrate on it. We have to discuss it. We have to strive for it.

For those who are patient during Ramadān, of course there is a great reward. What is the reward? The promise of Paradise? Of course. You visualize Paradise in ways described to you. But what is this Paradise? It is goodness. It is harmony. It is peacefulness, and this is what we are striving for. It is not that we are striving for Paradise. It is that we are striving for those qualities that make our reality Paradisaical. When you are persevering, you are filled totally with the love of Allah Swt. The love of Allah Swt is the love for one another. The respect for Allah Swt is the respect for one another. The service to Allah

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Swt is the service for one another. I came to your door, you know, and I was hungry and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. Who is that? It is your neighbor. It is your brother. It is your sister. It is your uncle. It is your daughter. It is your husband. It is your wife. It is a friend. When we have Solitude Amidst the Crowd, it means that we are placed within ourselves, but we can be among others. This is a taste of Paradise too.

For those who are patient during Ramadān, who persevere during Ramadān, the greatest reward is that patience and perseverance itself. We have to find between ourself and another, between our self and our work, between our self and the world, between our self and our work, between our self and nature, there has to be peace. So we need to pray for peace. This is also the month where all the good efforts that you make will be added to, or all the wrongs that you repent from will be removed. Believe that. A person who is ready to be patient, to persevere, not to eat when they are hungry, that is part of Ramadān. By the way, is not just about fasting, you know. It is fasting from all these other things I have been talking about. By the way, don't eat during the month of Ramadān. It is a month of mercy. It is a month of love. It is a month of caring for others. It is a month of remembering. It is a month of forgiving, forgiving, forgiving. Don't hold grudges. Don't get angry. If you have to get upset, repent right away. Accept a person's repentance if it is to you directly. Don't hold onto things. Don't get upset. Don't think this. Don't think that. Love the ones that love you. Love even the ones that don't love you, then you are a Muslim, then you are a *mu'min*, then you are a *murīd*, then you are a *murad*. You cannot be a *murad* until you are a *murīd*. You ought to practice that, too.

The Prophet (sal) informed us that whoever fasted the month of Ramadān with faith/*iman*, the reward is forgiveness. Allah (Swt) knows best and what we need. All of us need
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forgiveness. He also said that, “*Whoever fast Ramadan with conviction and expectation, his previous mistake will be forgiven.*” So it is a two way street. The example is that Allah Swt forgives us if we act in a certain way. What is for us, we have to forgive us. We have to forgive others and ourselves. The second part is that we may feel embarrassed about it, but we don’t want to bring other things up either that aren’t right. So we have to look past people’s faults, also. So this is the time for understanding the *hadith qudsi*, “*Know yourself and you will know your Lord.*” There are many more things to discuss during the month of Ramadān. I will save them. *Asalām aleikum.*

Closing Prayers.