

February 5, 2010

Khutbah



Title: The Believer is Utmost in the Eyes of Allah

DVD title: What the Believer Values in the Face of the Greater Jihad
Caring for the Common Good

Opening Du'as

Many nations or civilizations or ways have passed (word means to withdraw to be withdrawn from) or many ways of living have passed before you so journey in the earth and see for yourselves and see what happened to those who rejected the Truth. It is a clear statement for in guidance and a cautionary reminder to those who guard themselves. (3:137-138)

In the history of humankind, many civilizations have come and gone. Many existent movements, forms or systems have been removed, withdrawn. We have to look around and see. The first thought, which often comes to mind when I read this verse, [is the greater jihad], especially the verse about not being dejected or grieving, which follows it.

Don't lose heart or grieve for you will overcome if you are believers. (3:139)

It doesn't just relate to what Prophet (sal) has historically been talking, about having the upper hand in the battle in the lesser *jihad*, but what it means in the greater jihad. The spirit of this message, the meaning has lots of implications and points of view, but it is much greater and wider in the aspect of the greater *jihad* and the struggle with the *nafs*. Certainly, it describes an eternal state of mind which should inspire a believer to be conscious, to think and to measure things carefully and to value them—to put a value on things. What is a value of a friendship? What is a value of a cursory relationship? What

is the value of a house compared to the value of a life? What is the value of the truth? What is the value of freedom and democracy? What is the value of consciousness? What is the value of understanding roles? What is the value of having parameters in which one lives and makes decisions, and therefore which one makes *muhasabat* and evaluates, inspires us to be conscious and to think and to measure things carefully?

It describes a state of life which should remain (I don't want to say immovable because change in life is very important), but a way of life that is bounded and directed. Just like the topics we have been talking about recently, direction and *tarbiya*/education, it has a direction to it. It is not just knowledge, but it has a direction to it. If the heart of the believer remains firm in the face of difficulties, in the face of situations and conditions, and a person can maintain their standard, no matter who they are, then this withdrawal of the Divine Guidance is not going to happen, either on an individual level, or personal level with one's *shaykh*, or on a global level, on a civilization scale.

We see in the world today, and even in our own country, how people are only concerned with politics and are not concerned with the people that they represent. One party says no to what ever the other party suggests; consequently, nothing happens. The whole idea is to topple the other party, so that you get control; then the other party topples you, and people are left aside. Human beings are left aside. Arrogance reigns and good intentions are questioned. People have more than one agenda and this is the way life is today. We have to look at Islam and see if there is superiority in this faith. Is there a faith in our own self and in our own identity, and in values that are in this Text, in this Revelation that we hold dear? [Is there a faith] in our own identity above all other values that come from Allah?

It means that we have to be cognizant of the limitations of the powers in this world—the ones, of course, that are deviated from faith, the ones that deviate from human concern, above the forms with which we come into contact every day, and beyond even the

cultural attitudes and customs that have not been, shall I say, enhanced by faith. We have to be above those things, meaning that we have to be more focused on what the truth is, what the capability is within each one of us to reflect the Divine Attributes. What this ‘*āyat* is telling us is that with faith and trust in Allah and following this path, we are superior, not because we are superior human beings, but we have a higher view. We have a way of overcoming weaknesses. We have a wealth of capability and a wealth of knowledge which can be used not only for our own benefit but for the benefit of others *fi sabīli-Llāh*.

We have knowledge; we have faith, the kind of knowledge and faith that embraces others, that feels a concern and love for others. We see it in good Christians who went down to Haiti to try to help, in Jews or other Muslims who go, in secularists or non-believers who go and feel a human concern for the people of Haiti. Then you see other things, you know. You don’t really know what the motivation is. Why were these people arrested? They may serve many years in prison. Maybe their intentions were good. Maybe they weren’t good. Who knows? But we do know there was not a concern for the rule of law. That we know. We say, “Oh, look at this country. It is all devastated so we can go and do anything we want. Take these poor children and we will take them to the Dominican Republic and we are going to see that they have good families.” Let us not doubt their motive. But there certainly was a disrespect for the rule of law. In the same way, people do good things and have good intentions in life, but they have a disrespect for the rule of law, for the Revelations of Allah.

It then becomes not just a normal struggle that each one of us has as human beings, to do what is good and what is right, to amend what is wrong, to ask for forgiveness and to repent, to overcome our weaknesses, and all the things that we all have to do, but then there is an arrogance that comes. “I don’t really have to do that. I don’t have to do much of that. I can just do ‘good works.’” Well, we can, but you see what happens if you abandon in this case the rule of national law or secular law in a country like Haiti.

Our superiority may be in the potential that we have. It may be in what is offered to us that can be interpreted and lived in a way that uplifts our soul, and makes life and service very meaningful to us. It is not that we change our behavior just because of some populist belief. When you look at the politicians, you get the impression that they somehow think that they will live forever. I don't know what it is they want: a statue in Lafayette Park? What is it they want that makes them so arrogant and so unwilling to serve the people that elected them?

We live in a society of “no.” We live in a society of resistance, of denial, of preferences. Nobody cares for the collective will, the collective good, or what our predecessors in the secular history of our country called “the common will.” This is a commonwealth, this state that we are in: The Commonwealth of Virginia. I have only lived on commonwealths, actually. I studied common law because of that. People forget. People forget. So what happens? The civilization dies. The civilization as we know it goes away. “Life is not the same, as it was.” “Life is not the way it used to be before 9/11.” Or whatever. Pick a date before the French Revolution, before the Roman Empire fell, before... whatever. “Life is not what it used to be during the Roman Empire.” “Life has changed since the dinosaurs.” Things *have* changed. It is not that you hope to hold onto the past, but to hold onto what is the common good. When the common good is eclipsed, when the rules, the laws, the principles are abrogated for the common good, then there is no good anymore. There is nothing in common that hold the people together. I am afraid that we live in a time like that.

“Ah! Another person has embrace Islam, today. *Alhamdulillah!*” I understand why some people get excited about that. But then we say, which Islam? Another crazy person joined Al-Qaeda? Another nutty person embraces Salafi? Another potential nut became *Hizbu-t- Tahrir*? Another goofy person became a goofy soofi. What is Islam? It is a way to safety, a way to security, a way to peace, a concern for others, a love for the people of the Book, a love of all humanity? *Alhamdulillah!* If they went from being an

absent minded person walking like a zombie in the earth, or an arrogant ego-centered individual out for themselves, and they embrace this Islam that gives them this universal point of view, *alhamdulillah*, I join with the *alhamdulillah* people. But you don't have to change your faith to change your behavior. Indeed, what happens if someone changes their attitude or their behavior or refines themselves is they become more of a faithful individual.

This society that has only logic and reason at its basis, well, a good argument could be made for anything. All you have to be is in control of the logic. It places a lot of pressure, a lot of heaviness, a lot of weight on someone who is not protected by some other element of society, who doesn't have a strong force behind them. If I go and I present to the President a logical argument that he should push legislation through that will show that if you give a billion dollar bonus to a banker, money will trickle down to society through Macy's and Bloomingdales, Lexus and Yachts. They will put 12 yacht makers to work, and it will help by putting 100 people selling at Macy's. I can put a logical argument forward, but there is no humanity in that.

A society that lives in a climate of its own ideas, whether you call that a society, an institution or mini civilization, whether you call it a corporation or a country, has no relationship with the feelings of the people. It has its own truths that it has created, and it is not aware of the truths of others. Those people driving in those cars from Wall Street, the banking area of New York, they live in a gated community. They fly in private planes. They drive in cars with darkened windows with a chauffeur. They call out to Grastidis for food, or some other place. In the 1970's in a small town in Connecticut, we went to a grocery store, and there were no prices on anything. No one ever said, "How much is this?" They would say, "I will take 20 of these." All these exotic foods. They live in a world of their own.

When they go on vacation, they take a private yacht. When they stay at a hotel, they take a floor—in a gated hotel, or resort. The only people they come into contact with who are real people are the ones who shine their shoes or cut their hair, who they bring in—special dressers and shoppers from Nordstrom or some upscale department store. They never see reality. Then you wonder how they can care for everybody? They care about the common people? Are you kidding? They don't care for anyone. They get sick; they go to the Mayo Clinic. They go to some special clinic in Switzerland. They never come into contact with real people—ever. There are four people between them and anybody in society: the executive secretary, the secretary's secretary, the person at the front door, the receptionist, and then the security people downstairs where you sign in. If they are very big deals, when they take their car and go anywhere, there are always two or three cars in case somebody is trying to harm them, and they have body guards. But they don't have one sole guard. They don't have a guard over their heart, only a body guard. Get my drift? They don't have anybody protecting their souls. Why? Because they don't want to think about their souls, because they can't take all that stuff with them.

Every once in a while you have people like Melinda and Bill Gates, who decide that they will give all their money away for the benefit of humanity, *alhamdulillah*. But those people who stand against the direction of society are those people who allow only the powerful to dominate, or logic and reason may be used for their own interests but not for the common good. They lack conviction because they are not under the authority of anyone, not of any human being and not of God, their God, or of Allah. But Allah does not leave us behind if we are believers. He does not leave us alone in the face of oppression or difficulty. He does not create in us, if we are believers, a voice that only whimpers and cries in the darkness under the weight of our own troubles.

It is not Allah's intention or design for us to suffer in dejection or in grief. But Allah relieves us with a message, if we listen. He gives us hope with a message if we listen.

He gives us direction if we look, listen and watch for the message. He gives us faith if we open our heart.

Do not be dejected, do not grieve. You shall be the upper most if you are believers. (3:139)

Because that civilization never dies. That system is never affected by human beings and their arrogance, their political attitudes and their greed. It is not. It is only for us to choose which system we are going to find our nourishment in. We are going to have to live in this one system. We are part of this civilization. We are part of this nation that has been sent a message. If collectively, it does not get the message, individually, we get the message. If we choose to live in the message, so to speak, then there is hope for us. Hopefully, this message will give us some relief from fear of dejection and grief, unhappiness and misery, and give us natural feelings for other human beings who are in certain situations.

A lot of good people went down to Haiti. We sent money. We sent clothes. The children worked hard. A lot of people went down to Haiti to help—good people: Christians, Jews, Muslims, humanists... In doing that, they relieved themselves of many things, or perhaps, felt purpose in their lives. That is wonderful. It tells us that there is still good in the hearts of human beings. It tells us that the government may be politicized and corrupted, and corporations may be corrupt. Insurance companies are arrogant and corrupt. Nations are polluting the air. There are arrogant, ignorant, stupid people who use religion to kill their own brothers and sisters. There is corruption throughout the world. There is tremendous entropy happening, destructive forces in the world today, but some people are still good in their hearts. How many? It doesn't take much to dial a phone. It takes more to gather clothes and food. It takes a lot more to deliver it. It takes more to distribute it. It takes more to stay there and help the people and live with the stench of death and broken bodies. There are degrees of good and

availability. It does not mean that just because we donate by the phone that we are bad people. It just means that we are part of something that is good.

This also builds patience and perseverance, and relieves us from a kind of spiritual oppression. It protects us from some of markers in society which corrupt. We get direction, just as this terminology in Arabic gives us a sense of direction; and [we get] standards and guidelines, rules and customs, which are not the ones that are just based on habit, dogma or selfishness. In fact, the believer is utmost in the eyes of Allah because of the authority behind the person who believes. The authority is the source of the belief. The authority is the source of his or her own guidance. When we say in the Eyes of Allah, it means that if you are following the guidelines of Allah, if you are following the premise of Allah, then of course you are a beloved of Allah.

What is to be said of this physical world/*dunya*, the people and customs of this world? One can say that in people's eyes, or on their tongue or in one person's eyes or in their heart, there will always be guidance. There is always something to be learned. There is always some possibility for submission or humility. That is why the believer is superior to others. But we see what happens, as we saw in the financial debacle in this country this year, when people don't take responsibility. They go begging at the door of government. The door is open and the banks swing open; there is no accountability, literally. Where there is no accountability, how can the world benefit?

The believer is somebody who is accountable, who understands where this assistance comes from, who is humble, who says, "I have a duty and a responsibility." If we see this world through the eyes of somebody who has faith, then [we see through] the doubts, the fears, the worries, the logical systems, and the religions that people hide behind, as opposed to the ones that they practice (I don't mean practice by putting your head to the ground, but practice by values). Then you see that a person of faith cuts through all the superficialities. What is achieved by a person of faith is very different

from what is achieved by a person who is only living in this world in a greedy, arrogant way.

It may look like the greedy, arrogant person has everything. They have the big office. They have the four people between you and them. They have the big limo car with the dark windows. They have the yacht. They have the house behind the gate. They have servants. They have somebody polishing their shoes, ironing their shirts, hanging up their things, wiping their mouths, or whatever. It may seem that they have something wonderful, but they don't.

The source of the belief of the good people is the knowledge of the Attributes of Allah. Where is that knowledge found? It is found in the hearts of the believer who has brought their capability, their consciousness, their mind and heart together and is humble. They see the example in our saints and teachers and their guides. Their conditions may change, but their faith doesn't.

Closing du'as.