

August 27, 2010

Khutbah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [What Is The Face of Allah?](#)

Dvd Title: Ikhlas and Nasiya: The Measure of Right Action we Must Meet

Opening Duas. Allah (swt) in the Holy Qur'an reveals:

“O people of the Book! Come to an agreement between us and you that we shall worship naught but Allah, and not ascribe to Him any partner. And none of us shall take for our Lords any but Allah.” If they turn away, say, “Bear witness that there are those who have surrendered to Allah.” (3:64)

And also in Suratu-n-Nisā:

And serve Allah. Do not associate anything with Him. Do your best to parents, your kin, orphans, the poor, and your neighbors who are near to you, and your neighbors who are strangers, and the companions by your side, and to the wayfarer and to those whom your right hand possesses. Truly, Allah does not love the proud and boastful. (4:36)

Finally, also in Suratu-n-Nisā,

Truly Allah does not forgive that anything is associated with Him, but He forgives what is less than that to whomever He wills. And whoever associates anything or anyone with Allah has contrived a terrible wrong for themselves. (4:48)

We've been talking about a lot of those things about *niyyat*, and I want to speak about *nasiya*, the real sincerity behind *niyyat*. Hopefully, we can all hear with open hearts and open minds something more practical on this subject of *nasiya* and *adab*. I don't want to stand here and speak about spiritual philosophy, but applied Islam, applied Sufism. First of all, [one must] understand that *ikhlas* is a condition that is set by Allah (swt) to accept the means through which Allah measures and accepts the righteous actions of a believer, of an individual done in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammed (sal).

When you hear me say this, I hope that one day I won't have to keep making these caveats and explanations. When I talk about "Allah accepting," I'm talking about harmony, *mīzān*, balance. Think of it this way, if you have trouble remembering that. Think of when you are compassionate. If you feel and act with compassion, then your actions reflect the feeling you have or the Quality of Allah (swt). If you see a situation for mercy, and you act mercifully, your intention is there and you are in total consonance with the Divine Presence as mercy. That's why we say, Allah accepts. It means when your *niyyat* and actions match the Attribute of Allah (swt). Try to remember that.

Allah (swt) says what I repeated to you from Qur'an. When you and I think about this, it is not just about *shirk* and making comparisons with Allah. This whole idea of *shirk* also has to be understood as comparing and elevating something to the level of Allah. It is to compare something that is not compassionate with compassion, not love with love, not peace with peace. No matter what the language it, it is *shirk* when you make the comparison. When people say they are "against terrorists" and they are beating Muslims on the street, this is *shirk*. You can say it's hypocrisy, and yes it is. But it is also *shirk*. *Shirk* is elevating acts and wrapping them in religious garb, [though they are not really religious] or not really principled. We have to learn how to apply this to ourselves.

We may fail miserably every day, but the honesty is to see the failure and change, or to strive to change. Allah will judge our efforts, not our accomplishments. What does that mean? If you are making the effort to be peaceful, then you are in resonance with peace. People may say, “Peaceful to what degree? Under what circumstances?” That is human thinking, not a Divine Premise. When you and I think we are making right, good, and hard decisions; or when we think we are following our hearts or the truth, but it is not alive in our minds and hearts that we are doing this; rather, it is some kind of ideology, philosophy or ego-driven action or fear, then it has to be looked at as a form of *shirk*. It lacks sincerity.

The most grave spiritual mistake that people make is that they think they are worshiping Allah, but what they are doing is worshiping themselves. They think worshiping Allah is separate from living their lives. Think about that for a minute. Why do people think if they go to church, the synagogue, or the *masjid* that everything will be okay? Because they are doing “what Allah has commanded them to do.” Then you go out and do things in business and in your personal lives that runs the gamut of things that you know are wrong, to things that you really think are right, but they are not fully right. If you held it to the litmus test of something like, “Can what I am doing be considered truly in accordance with the Qur’an, the Sunnah, and the worship of Allah, *ibāda*?” Then you might get an answer. If the answer is “no,” or “I’m stretching it,” then there is no purity in the sincerity.

You can think you are being sincere, but sincerity is not a condition that *we* set up or define. It is a condition that is defined and set up by Allah (swt) in Qur’an, that we have to meet. It is in resonance with these principles, qualities, and attributes. I hope you see the difference. Abu Mahar (ra) said,

Once a man came to Allah’s Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him), and said, “What do you think about a man who joins us in fighting only to seek fame

and wealth.” Allah’s Messenger (sal) replied, “He receives nothing.” The man repeated the question again, and the Messenger said the same thing. The man repeated the question a third time, and after the third time, the Prophet (sal) said, “Indeed, Allah does not accept an action, unless it is done with ikhlas, seeking nothing but His Face.”

What is the Face of Allah (swt)? The Face of Allah is compassion, tolerance, patience, kindness. That is the Face of Allah (swt). Perseverance, love. That is the seeking of the face of Allah (swt). In other words, it is with Allah (swt) fully in mind and worshiping Allah, acts of worship, *ibāda*. You could think, “I could go steal with Allah in mind, and that would make it okay. I can go eat the banana where Allah can see me, knowing it, and say, *astaghfiru-Llāh* .” Or you can plan out, “I’m going to go eat the banana, and then say *astaghfiru-Llāh* , and then everything will be okay.” Only no one would make that stupid argument, except a stupid person. We can all claim some stupidity, because if you really look at your life, you see how often you really do that. The problem is what? There has to be an alignment with the Sunnah and the Qur’an, which are in alignment with these principles and values. The Prophet (sal) said,

May Allah brighten whoever hears my words, memorizes them, and then conveys them to others.

Many a carrier of knowledge does not understand the knowledge, and many a carrier of knowledge conveys it to one who has better understanding than themselves.

There are three things which the heart of a believer has no malice about: ikhlas for Allah in one’s actions; sincere advice to Muslim leaders; and clinging to the jamat, the gathering.

Well, what are your expectations? If your relationship is between you and Allah, and you give good advice to Muslim leaders, you are not looking for them to take your advice or not take your advice, or praise your advice, or condemn you for your advice – any of which can happen, and probably all of it will, given the Muslims leaders in the world today. The meaning of that is that there are three things that strengthen your heart. If you adopt them, then your heart is purified from deceit, deception, corruption, and things that make you go astray. These are phrases we might have some difficulty with inside ourselves, but think of it as making you fall away from what is clear, true, good, and beneficial to you and others, and therefore it is evil. Evil does exist; it is not some thought in someone's mind.

Allah says, “**No servant can be free from Shaytan except by having *ikhlas*.**” That's the way of being free from Shaytan. A person could do something wrongly or weakly or unintentionally, but if they have *ikhlas*, Allah will free them from the Shaytanic result of it. If with all sincerity you do something, that's what the measurement will be. It tells us. It has been related by one of the Sahabah that the Prophet (sal) said, “***Have ikhlas and then you will be purified.***” When any portion of this world in which our heart or soul finds some kind of contentment or comfort; when it inclines either a great deal toward or a little bit toward this world, meaning towards possessiveness, attachment or attraction in a way that love of the creation is the next breath and you praise of Allah (and I don't mean false praise of Allah); when you are inclined to the beauty of nature and you praise Allah; when you incline to help someone, and it's not so you get a reward but you thank Allah for that opportunity, then it's beautiful. If you are a person who believes in Allah, and you look up and say, “*Alhamdulillah*, what a beautiful day this is” as the fall approaches, or summer ends, “My God, what a beautiful day.” Now you extrapolate that idea to everything.

Attachment to the world means you like what you are seeing, so you don't associate it with Allah. Attachment to Allah means you like what you are seeing and you associate it

with Allah. One is shirk, one is not. It doesn't keep you from liking what you are seeing. When any of that lack of association with Allah enters into our actions, it colors it and mars the purity. It ruins the *ikhlas*. Because we are preoccupied with that share of *dunya* that we have, we become immersed in our desires and with that relationship with our share of *dunya*; then very seldom, if at all, our acts are acts of worship free from temporal objectives, objectivity or objectification.

“Whosoever secures in their lifetime even a single moment of ikhlas, seeking the face of Allah, will be saved,” the Prophet (sal) said. That's how precious it is. Remember, this is a condition set by Allah. It doesn't mean we can just be attached to whatever we want, or desire whatever we desire, and hope for one moment in our life that we will have *ikhlas* about it. It means in our practice, affirmation and *niyyat*, as we walk through the day, alone with ourselves or even in the company of others, there is *nasiya*. You will eventually achieve that state. It is a very practical thing, that state. It is a form of *at-tazkiyat*/purification.

This condition is a way of sharing wealth and benefits that Allah (swt) has given us with one another, and telling ourselves and others. That's why I am trying to share with you what has been given to me to share. It's a form of *at-tazkiyat*, of *zakat*. It's a pillar, and it purifies us. *Ikhlas* and *nasiya* cleanse the heart of its impurities to such a degree that the intentions of coming near to Allah have no other motive to them than to come near to Allah. Coming near to Allah means what? Go back to what I said at the beginning: it means being compassionate, merciful, understanding, and aware that *that* is Allah. We cannot even imagine what it is, except [by being] someone who truly loves Allah, and is so absorbed in thinking about Allah that there is no place in the heart for anything other than that. Whether eating, sleeping, or drinking, *ikhlas* is in our actions.

This is, of course, why every day in Ramadān we are to make the *niyyat* to fast, a sincere *niyyat*. It is not enough to make it one time. You have to make it every day. Allah is the

Possessor of all things, and the Distributor of all things. We say it in shortspeak as it has been said for generations upon generations by all religious people, whether Jews, Christians or Muslims: All things are His. I remind you again, for the 101,000 time, “he” is not a person. “He” is not a thing. “He” is not an entity. When I say a sentence like that, a person who truly loves Allah is a person who is truly compassionate, who has love and peace in their hearts, who has tolerance and patience in their heart, who strives to be sincere, who strives to understand the value of that relatedness with Allah in everyone, relating to some people through compassion, and other people through love and compassion. It is not just through one thing; it can be through mercy, patience or tolerance.

We all have that opportunity all the time, with our children, our husbands, our wives, our families, brothers, sisters, neighbors. One who is truly compassionate with love or peace or any of these qualities, knowledge, justice, then that person really loves Allah (swt). That is the type of person, a kind person, who can experience and receive the *at-tazkiyat*, the purification and blessing of *nasiya*. You taste and see and hear with the light of Allah (swt). That is different than tasting and seeing and hearing with the light of your knowledge or your attachments, fears and desires, your fantasies, greed or worldly sincerity, your possessiveness or acquisitiveness. We know many people who are sincere. But if that sincerity is not linked in the way I am trying to relate, it may be attached to something else.

Sincerity attached to fear, has fear of loss with it. When the loss comes, the person is no longer sincere. The humility that is attached to things of this world (ownership) goes away when the ownership goes away. [If attached to health, goes away when/if] the health goes away. If happiness is attached only to health, then when the health goes away, the happiness goes away. It's just a fact. We've all seen it. Patience in life when we want something... “Oh, I've been on this path so long, I want something else.” If it is attached to that something else, happiness goes away.

Perhaps the most important thing, as least for me in this moment, is that the things that used to be satisfying are no longer satisfying. The things you were trying to make meaningful or thought were meaningful are no longer meaningful. The ideas and actions that you thought were insincere were maybe because you were rebelling a little in your own mind, heart, or intellect. [Perhaps you] had not achieved the level of spiritual awareness, maturity, or progress you thought you had. [Perhaps] the things you thought you were doing were because you thought you *had* to do them or *were supposed* to do them. But if in the prayer, fasting, job or whatever, you all of a sudden make a decision and do it with sincerity, they all come back, and they are all meaningful. It's like flipping a switch.

We say in English, "I discovered it for myself." Yeah, well... but *you* didn't make it. It doesn't fit. Unless there is an element of prayer, devotion, spiritual values, then that transformation cannot happen. So it wouldn't be *nasiya*. Our sincerity only comes because there is that element of spiritual value. Any arguments we make are no longer valid. We should embrace the arguments that are no longer valid; the things in this world that used to drive you crazy, you now see as a means to refine you, an opportunity to refine your sight, to make you patient and tolerant. Those are all attributes of Allah. That's the Face of Allah. So you make yourself turn back to Allah in a proper way, to your service to Allah and to the creatures. Even if it is a refinement that came at a price, it is still refinement.

The Prophet Muhammed (sal) said, "***Therein lies portents for those who read the signs.***" What does it mean to read the signs? [It is for] those who have vision, for those who have become awakened. There is another *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammed (sal). "***Allah has servants who know the truth about people through reading the signs.***" The first sign you learn to read on the road back to *nasiya* (or to *nasiya* if you have never been there) is that sign you have been carrying here, in your heart. That is the thing that is

engraved in your heart. It is not something that someone has pasted on your heart. If you love animals, and you don't need to hunt them for food, you won't hunt them.

Otherwise, you need a sign that says, "No hunting." You will not go hunt an animal just to kill them, if you have sincerity.

It's very well established in a secure *hadith* that at the end of time, every Muslim will be endowed with the ability to read signs, and recognize the truth from the untruth, and the good from the evil. There is a story about this from Junayd.

I went out one day to the market for something I needed. I saw a funeral procession, so I followed it, because we are enjoined to do that, in order to pray. As I stood among the people as they buried the dead man, and my eyes unwitting fell upon a woman who was unveiled. I lingered, looking at her. I held back, and began to beg forgiveness from Allah. On my way home, an old woman said to me, "My Lord, why do I see your face all darkened?" I looked in a mirror and behold, my face had turned dark. I examined my conscience about what calamity could have befallen me, and I remembered the look I cast upon the woman who was unveiled.

I sat alone somewhere and began to ask Allah (swt) for forgiveness. Assiduously I asked, and I asked to be able to do with little for forty days. During that time, the thought came to my heart, "Visit your Shaykh, Al Junayed!" I traveled then to Baghdad. When I reached the room in which he lived, I knocked on the door. He said to me, "Enter, O Abu Ahmed. You sinned in al Huba, and we ask forgiveness for you here in Baghdad."

Now, that's insight. Things you didn't see, things you thought were normal or were okay in society. All of a sudden it becomes clear as a bell that it's just not the right way. The veil of deception falls; the love blossoms; you realize that you have a garden filled with

fruits and flowers, and one in which only those who qualify can enter that garden. This is a condition that Allah (swt) has a name for: *ikhlas* and *nasiya*. Believe me, it's true. If you don't believe me, there are others among you who can tell you it's true. I tell you what I think the value of this talk is.

I think the best we can hope for is when we face realities in our lives; when we have gotten to the place on our own in meditation, through our struggles, through our values, our fasting, our prayer, our *muraqabah*, *tafakkur*, *dhikr*, living in this community, being in *tekkia*, in a *khanqah*, through our *ba'at*, through any and all of these things; when we get to certain situations in our existence, we might remember that there was a talk on this subject, and it was something that might be of value to you. Otherwise, it will just go in the file. Everybody only hears these talks once. I don't expect too many people received enlightenment in this *khutbah*, although the capacity for being uplifted and enlightened is there. My only hope is that at some moment it might dawn on any or all of us that this is really an important thing. You might be blessed by Allah (swt) to the degree that you might remember it at the right time. That's the most we can hope for, perhaps. If there's more, *alhamdulillah-Llāh*. *Inshā'a-Llāh*, we will find out about it if we are sincere. *Asalaamu aleikum*. Du'ās.

SECOND KHUTBAH. Du'ās.