

September 3, 2010

Khutbah



Title: [Holding Fast to the Rope of Allah in Ramadan](#)

DVD title: Farewell Friday: The Favors and Blessings of Ramadān

Opening *du'ās*.

Allah (swt) in Qur'an enjoins us with something very appropriate and that we know very well:

Hold fast to the rope of Allah altogether and do not be divided and remember the favor of Allah upon you and how you were enemies and he brought your hearts together so that through His blessings you became as brothers and you were made on the brink of an abyss of fire and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear His signs that you may be guided.

And there may grow out of you a community who invites all to goodness and enjoin the doing of right and forbid the doing of wrong as those who are successful.

And do not be like those who are divided and argue among themselves after they have been given clear proofs. For them is terrible suffering. (3:103-105)

This message is, of course, extremely important for the world and what is happening today. One can spend many hours of discussion on this and making *tafsir* of these 'āyāt. We look at the world in which we are living in and at the state of people's prejudices and bigotry towards Muslims and others. We are coming out of this month of Ramadān and

this is the Farewell Friday of Ramadān. Next Friday, *inshā'a-Llāh*, will be the Eid. Although there will be a *khutbah* on that day, this is the Farewell Friday. We have to remember that in order to have secure belief and to be aware of Allah's (swt) Divine presence, we also have to commit to hold fast to the rope. We have to commit very much, personally, to the very many other guarantees that Allah has given us.

I am thinking that I will be talking about guarantees on the Eid. I want to talk about *takāful* again on the Eid and our reciprocal responsibilities to one another, how we ensure our responsibilities, not only towards Allah (swt), but to each other. So I am not going to draw on that today, but to just tell you, in terms of the Farewell Friday, what have we gained and what have not gained from our fasting or from our inner fasting. These are to be determined, not just by us but by each other, how we are with one another.

The benefit of fasting *fī sabīli-Llāh* does not mean that you are fasting for some distant God. It means you are fasting for the benefit of acquiring awareness and ability to reflect the Divine Presence. Fasting for the sake of Allah means fasting for the sake of capturing and holding close to us compassion and mercy, tolerance and patience, love and understanding, a sense of justice, a sense of regal-ness and beauty, majesty and tolerance. Most people do not get it. They fast for a God somewhere out there. But fasting *fī sabīli-Llāh* is capturing these qualities in our self. Then if that is so, there has to be some motivation to keep that. The greatest motivation to keep that is to do what is mutually beneficial.

I will try to talk about our mutual benefit and our mutual protection and guarantees. To hold fast to the rope (having been told from the outside, so to speak) because you are on the brink of an abyss of fire—many of us do not have to be told that. Maybe we need to be reminded, but we know that our self. Then some of us become disinterested or distracted, or we reject this whole concept because we do not like the metaphor of an abyss of fire. We reject the whole idea that we are on tenuous ground. Perhaps, the

worst part of it is not burning up in some fire, like some hell fire. The worst part of it is not knowing and thinking everything is fine, and not having that sense of duty and responsibility to one another. See how I keep getting back to that subject.

The Prophet (sal) said in a *hadith*: ***“Verily Allah likes three things for you and He disapproves of three things for you. He is pleased that you worship Him and do not associate anything with Him, and that you should hold fast to the rope of Allah and not be scattered. He disapproves for you irrelevant talk, persistent questioning and the wasting of wealth.”*** That is pretty clear. It certainly is encouragement not to speak too long today. These themes are at the root of Ramadān, also: worshiping Allah, fasting for the sake of Allah, not associating anything with Allah, holding fast to the rope of Allah. Those are the favors and the blessings, and I have explained those already to some degree. To ‘not be scattered’ is to say that we all come together in Ramadān, and we know that it assists us. We know that by just the fact that there are millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions of people fasting, assists us.

The ‘disapproval of irrelevant talk’ is also part of Ramadan. What is ‘persistent questioning’? Questioning to get answers is one thing. Questionings to affirm your doubts is another—questioning, questioning and questioning that builds your doubts. This is what Allah is telling us. It is not to stay away from a question, but persistent questioning [used] for the sake of feeding your doubts.

The [way to look at] ‘wasting of wealth’ is *zakat al-fitr*. Giving to those who are poor is a way of saying that I have things to share. You look at your wealth and you calculate your *zakat* for the year. You [calculate] the amount of money you have in the bank, and the amount of gold you have, and the stocks you have, and whatever it is that you have, [and you find that] you owe \$2,500 in *zakat*. How many of us can write a check for \$2,500 just like that? Not easy. We live too close to the bone. So now you think and say, “Well, it is not that I am going to feel guilty about it, it is that I see that I have not

planned for it. I have not put something aside for that.” It is like some of us pay our taxes on a quarterly basis, so we have to put some money aside every quarter for the taxes. We should be putting money aside for the *zakat*, but many people do not do that. They don’t have any interest in doing that, because we don’t have a sense of responsibility to others, only to our own family.

So [we give] *fī sabīli-llāh*, because Allah is also the Generous One, the Giver. He is the Provider. Allah is providing all the time. In social mechanisms Allah provides; He provides through your hands. He provides good guidance through your lips. He provides good help through your hands. Not that you feel guilty, but you feel responsible. We all have to think about that. That is why it is important to give to the poor. If these things are contemplated, somehow we have accomplished our fast. If you couldn’t fast from food, go back and look at the other things you could have done, and [ask yourself] did you do them. It is not too late. You have a week left. It is not too late. As well as owing the bank this much, the credit card company this much, Sears this much, Wal-Mart that much, I also have a \$2,500 bill to Allah that I need to pay. [We prioritize] mortgage payments [at the top of our list], credit card payments under that, whoever is going after us under that, and under that, those who are not going after us; then the community, and then the *zakat* [at the bottom!]. Need torque; got to switch it around. When you switch it around, you feel better because everything else will be provided for. It is the truth.

After a battle, Imam Ali (ra) wrote a detailed testament in favor of his son, Imam Hasan. It is a very beautiful quote of guidance and council, which provides guidance for all of us. He says, “*Son, I enjoin on you that you should fear Allah, follow His commandments, enliven your heart in His remembrance and hold fast to His rope. No relationship is stronger than a relationship that exists between you and Allah.*” Well, what is a rope? It is a bunch of very weak threads that are braided together to make something strong. We are the weak threads. Each one of us is a weak thread and we are braided together as an *ummah in jamat*, and as a community. That makes us strong.

Today we have an opportunity to experience something of a yearly cycle on a day that is a special day, a special Friday within the Fridays, within the last week of Ramadān. The doors of heaven are still open. The doors of hell are still closed. Allah (swt) blesses Fridays that come in Ramadān in a special way, and it is a time for us to contemplate that things are going back to normal, God forbid. Instead of celebrating on the Eid that we have made it through another Ramadān, we should be, in some way, concerned that we won't carry the messages that we have learned. Some of them have been painful. Some of them have been difficult. Some have been deep questions in some people. I have gotten letters; I have had discussions: "The fast has been harder this year or not has hard this year," or whatever.

All the angels and saints who accompany us this month, just as we do at the end of summer, are going to take off for Cancun for a few days or somewhere and take a little vacation. They won't be around to protect us, much. That is what happens, you know. All the *awliyā* and the angels work very hard during Ramadān so they will take a little vacation. It is very difficult for them this year because it is during hurricane weather. Before they leave, we have to thank them in our hearts. We should recite the Names of Allah (swt). We should recite the *fatam shareef*. We should recite the names of our *awliyā*. We should remember by name. They are names with meanings. It is not like we are standing over and saying, "Thank you, Bob. Thank you Sam. Thank you, Joe. Thank you, Steve." We are saying names like Muhammed and Mustafa and Jafar. These name have meanings. We should say them with sincerity, and thank the angels that are surrounding us this month.

You don't believe there are angels surrounding you this month? You lived through it. Some of you had real challenges. Some of you had questions and you came to me. I am certainly not an angel, but I was able to maybe give you some guidance and upliftment in the midst of your difficulties, give you hope, strength to persevere, because I am assisted

by those angels. You wonder why I wear a coat a lot, to assist with those wings so you don't see them. Remember these angels are not leaving right away. They will be there for the Eid, waiting on the roadside. You should greet them as you walk.

We have to remember how sweet Ramadan can be, how dear to us it can be. Some of us were able to fast last year but not this year. Some of us were not able to fast for a number of years and were able to fast this year, *subhāna-Llāh*. We do not know whether we will be able to fast next year. I began Ramadān being able to kneel and pray, and I have ended Ramadān having to sit in a chair a lot. We don't know what is in the future. We can become ill or we can become healthy. There are those of us who remember those who can't fast among us, and those of us who struggle with our own fast and we just forget about those who aren't fasting.

So much to learn! When Ramadān comes with all its blessings and rewards, we hope and pray that we continue to have those blessings and those rewards throughout the whole year. Silently we fear that won't or worry that we won't or, God forbid, don't care if we don't. Though Ramadān leaves us as the moon rises and sets and rises again, we should not ever leave Ramadān. We should follow our guest as our guest travels from this earth to another realm and to another realm. Just as the sun rises and the moon rises over this planet, Ramadān rises over planets upon planets upon planets for beings that we don't even know. Every day is a Ramadān summer on someone's calendar, but we have no idea. Allah tells us that He is the Lord of all the worlds.

We cannot follow the moon around the earth, but we can follow the spirit of the month. We can fast six days in the month of Shawwal. It has said that ***“anyone who fasts those six days after fasting the month of Ramadan will be rewarded for the fasting equivalent to a whole year.”*** We have the making up of the days that we missed. Then we have the whole month of Shawwal to really catch up on that. In the last few days of Ramadān, there are a few things that we should try and do: complete the recitation of Qur'an, of

course. Increase our kindness and generosity and hospitality to one another, so we know that it is secure to pay our *zakat al-fitr*. Distribute the food that has been distributed through our children and the school. Try and observe the Laylatu-l-Qadr. Pay our yearly *zakat*. (Don't wait until the last day of the year). Sit more. Distribute gifts. Do more *dhikr*. Do *tasbi*. Make more *taraweeh* and special prayers for the glorification of Allah (swt), and we should prepare for the happiness and the festivities of the Eid. We should pray for those who have died.

Ed Stern's mother died yesterday. We will make *du'ā* for her today. She is being buried as we are speaking. She was like a second mother to me for a few years. I used to smell her cooking in the kitchen and her special cookies that she would make. She lived a long life and was loved by people. She served people until she couldn't walk anymore, taking care of others in her community and her society. We should remember those people. It was a blessing that she died during the month of Ramadān, even though she was Jewish. Allah doesn't care. We pray that Allah (swt) sees that if we live longer, we are the kind of people like those worshippers, and believers and servants. Whatever rewards we attain and whatever good deeds we perform, we are grateful to Allah and grateful to His Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) for bringing a beautiful message, and grateful to our *shuyukh* and grateful to our own self that we found our way.

Whoever fasts this month of Ramadān, the Prophet Muhammed (sal) said, "With faith and expectation for Allah, his previous sins will be wiped away, *inshā'a-Llāh*." After Ramadān, we have to remember certain things as we enter the month of Shawwal and as we try and fast those six days. As Ramadān leaves us, the spirit should remain with us and give us a good "fast" start on the year. We came in a little tired and dirty, and we hopefully leave cleansed, forgiving and forgiven. We came in with some misguidance in our own mind and tired, but new guidance and understanding will, hopefully, exit with us—more piety, more self-discipline, more self-control, more submission, more self-restraint, more *muhasabat*. *Inshā'a-Llāh*, Ramadān will leave us with a sense of pride

and dignity for being Muslims, for being human beings, for being Sufis with a renewed sense of obedience to Allah (swt) and a full commitment and loyalty to His allegiance. We have consumed a great deal during this month. Now we have to learn to live with only the consuming of food, unless we can bring the Ramadan with us.

O Allah, forgive the sins that I have committed earlier and those that I have committed later and those that I have done secretly and those that I have done openly. And when I transgress from those sins of mine and which I am better aware of them myself, for you are the expediter and the deferrer and there is no God except You. *Asalaam aleikum.*

Closing *du'ās.*