

December 17, 2010

Khutbah

Title: [The Remedy to Afflictions is Patience](#)DVD title: Believing in Allah's Decree, Bitter or Sweet
Patience with Our Qadr

Time goes fast. All the strenuous events, whatever they might be, have passed; yet Allah still showers us with responsibilities and challenges. He created all of us to be multi-taskers. Very rarely do we have just one thing that we have to deal with, one thing we have to think about, one thing we have to conclude before we start anything else. I suspect that's the way it was even from the time of the cave men. One Allah... multi-tasking human beings. I don't think Allah multi-tasks. If we understand that Allah is all these attributes, aspects, qualities and attributes, then how we task ourselves with using those qualities and attributes (each one being singular – *ahad* – each one being one) [we realize] Allah is One. Allah is not many. The fact that Allah is One tells us something very, very significant and important. He is Ahad / One. This One has many attributes, but each attribute is the attribute of the One.

We are sloshing around in the winter slush right now, and we heard a rumor that the seasons might change in the not too distant future. The sun came out today, and it's a little over 40 degrees maybe, so we can remember the fall. If it got up to 50 or 60, the flowers might start to pop out. Sometimes we push it a little. We have a hyacinth growing in a pot in our house to remind us that the spring is coming, but we can't really do much more than a pot or two. Allah (swt) gave us good advice in the Holy Qur'an, in a *surah* called "The Story":

O you who securely believe! Do not take those who cover up the truth as protectors instead of the believers. Do you wish to furnish Allah with clear proofs against you?

He also says in Qur'an, **“As for him who shall repent and believe and do right, he haply may be one of the successful. The Lord Allah brings to task what He wills.”**

A saint said, *“I heard the blessed Prophet (sal) say Allah, the Majestic said, “He who is not content with My decree does not believe in My destiny. Let him seek a god other than Me.”* Again, it was reported that he said, *“None of you will believe unless he believes in the decree, its goodness and badness, its sweetness and its bitterness.”*

So, in our Islam, we are told that life is not just to be sweet and wonderful with no problems; or that we should hear a lot of excuses of all the things that we have done, or the wrong somebody has done to us. We are also told that everything is learned from contrast and from the opposites. There is no absolute balance in creation at any one moment unless we create it within ourselves—that is, in relationship with our Self to our self, and in our relationship to other human beings. There is a positive and negative, just as we have ups and downs and fronts and backs and insides and outsides. There is good and bad, right and wrong with many degrees to them. It is a very profound teaching because it is so simple, so realistic, so reflective—and we all have experienced it.

We are told that every one of those occurrences and circumstances is meaningful, whether it is sweet or bitter, whether it is good or bad, whether we are right or we find that we are wrong, whether it is proper or improper. Each holds a lesson for us as we strive to become more human, strive to become nearer to Allah (swt), strive to perfect ourselves. We can have a perfection that we can have inside of ourselves in this world, if we really know how to refine ourselves—a perfection that remains with us here and in the Hereafter. Certainly it is the promise of the Hereafter when Allah (swt) looks at our destiny and sees how we have chosen to live it. You have heard a lot about destiny over the years, and I hope, *inshā'a-llāh*, you contemplate it. It has a lot to do with the choices we make.

Choice is a very important part of life. Sometimes the choices are extremely easy, and sometimes it is difficult. We don't know. We don't know, and we make the choice. We trust in Allah that all that Allah is interested in is not what the choice is, but that we made it with a sincere heart, with good intention, with hope, and with trust. Even the smallest child learns choice every day. Often they are wrong: they don't put a hat on in the winter. They leave their gloves off. They come back soaking wet from the snow. Then they sneeze and call Bapu up, and we have to give them remedies. We have to also understand that there are guidelines and rules that are not there to torment us or to restrict us, but to give us direction, to sustain us, and to help us.

Often, very often, [they are there] to protect us, just like the signs on the highway show us where to go, how to drive, and when a curve is coming next so we can prepare ourselves, because we can't control everything, can we? Because of that, sometimes they put metal up as barriers, but the barriers don't keep the deer from jumping over them. So we can't feel absolutely totally one hundred percent secure in our choices, but we can make them with the utmost and 100% sincerity. We find the barriers are also there to keep us from going over the edge—the rules, the guidelines, the regulations, the laws.

We have to understand that laws and guidelines are not there to create some kind of restriction, but to outline a path. Love outlines a path, and concern, and compassion, patience, perseverance and trust. They all outline paths. Every pathway has its guidelines and restrictions to some degree. In a sense, it is like water is restricted when it flows through a pipe so it gets to its destination—the smaller the pipe, the higher the pressure. The destination may be our sink. It may be a glass of water. It may be a hose. It might be our toilet. Each one has an obviously unique purpose, just like we have to understand that these laws and guidelines were set on purpose with a clear intention from Allah (swt), for each one of us and for each one of those rules. We think of them to be sweet or bitter, depending on our reaction to the events or watching how the events turn

out, not to how we approach those events. We wait for the response and then we say, “Oh that is sweet or that is bitter.”

If we have acted in error, the rules and guidelines come down on us, and it is proven to us that we have done something really in error. We may consider it bitter, unless we accept those reasons and those guidelines as a guide for the future. Even if it is bitter, we understand, then, that it is good for us. Just as we were told as children, when we had to take bitter medicine, that it would help us. I have, as you know, an endearing relationship with paregoric. If there is such a thing as deterrent theory in medicine, it is paregoric. God, I hated paregoric. Here comes the paregoric bottle. “No, I’m going to school! I feel better!” I am sure paregoric saved me from every becoming an alcoholic.

If we see that the rules and guidelines proved to us that we made the right decision, that may be like sweetness to us also. That sweetness is very important, because it’s a reinforcement too. If we have done something in error, then we will not consider that bitter; we can consider that a guideline. We are going to understand, *inshā’a-llāh*, why the laws are there. We have to have some degree of faith and acceptance. We have to act on that faith, sometimes because things are bitter, and faith is very closely associated with trust, and trust is where we started this whole life cycle, anyway. As I’ve said many times, you don’t see many newborn babies dressing or feeding themselves. It’s total trust. The trust that we have can be absolute in that we do not lose our trust in trust, itself. In that sense, we can be or should try to be unshakeable. The same word in Arabic (in Farsi too) is also associated with peace and security, as well as knowledge and consistency, *tawakkul*.

All of the opposites – the sweet the bitter, the good the bad, the happy the sad – are recognized within us as a result of certain causes that interact with us and circumstances that bring about our reaction, aligned with our *qadr*/ destiny. Certainly, certain events can be desirable in one moment and undesirable in another moment. Only when we

recognize how this process works and how we operate within our own self can we develop any insight into that situation. The children, when they are in a good mood and playing with each other, everything goes fine. In that same playing, ten or fifteen minutes later, they might become irritable toward one another. In the same circumstance, something else might intervene. We try to find out what the cause is and we put our focus on the cause; but we do not know whether it is annoyance or something just happened.

Our faith is ultimately related somehow to the effect. Our faith should be related to the inception to what appears to come before even the cause. The fact that we are in a place, we are being asked to be faithful under all circumstances. The relationship between cause and effect is a sense of unity between the two and if there is an outer, there has to be inner. If there is some sweetness, then there is some bitterness. There is a story about Ali Zayn Abd Deen (ra) who said,

I went out until I came to this wall and I leaned against it. There was a man wearing two white garments looking at my face. He said, "Ibn Ali Al-Hussein, what is the matter that I see you sad and depressed? You have some grief over this world and the provisions of Allah (swt)? Are you ready for good and evil?" I replied, "It is not about this that I am sad. But it is, as you say, a sadness about the Hereafter. It is a promise delivered by a compelling King, Allah (swt) Himself." He asked, "So what is your sadness from?" I said, "Fearful of a plot of Ibn Zubaya." The man laughed, "O Ibn Ali Hussein, have you seen a man who is fearful of Allah and Allah has not saved him?" I said, "No." He said, "Have you known a man who asked Allah, Glory to Him, and was not given what he asked for?" And I said, "No." I looked down and then looked up from where my head had dropped in shame and there was no one in front of me.

Here we see a good example of how our minds, even the mind of someone who is a great *imam*, the great-grandson of the Prophet (sal), can get involved with issues of this world, every day issues, and be fearful of someone plotting against him, forgetting where his protection comes from and where his own greatness comes from. He was not only forgetting about the *ghaib*, but forgetting how whenever he asks what he asks for, it is brought to him. From the unseen world this man appears and reminds him, and he became happy and tranquil again.

This great man, Ibn Ali Abu Deen, who was at the highest state of his own work, you would think he would have no doubts. His sadness, however, was due to his concern for another person's capacity to do evil and harm. He was afraid of the problems that a man might bring on his fellow human beings. He was worried about the ignorance that would lead a person to darkness. So a voice of Truth came to him from within his own self (it seems), and reminded him that as long as we are aware of the danger, as long as we have *taqwa*, we are safe. Whatever we ask of Allah (swt) for guidance, Allah (swt) will give it to us in some form.

Once that voice was heard in his own heart, it served his purpose and its purpose, and the worry disappeared. If it had not been for that worry, however, he might not have heard that voice and have his beliefs strengthened. Thus, we can see from opposites what a great blessing he had. It was also related that Imam Jafar Sadiq (ra) reported:

Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) laughed until his teeth showed. He said, "Do you not ask me what causes me to laugh?" They said, "Yes, O Prophet of Allah (swt), tell us." He said, "I am surprised at the Muslims, for there can be no decree which Allah makes upon them except for the good end of his affairs. Yet people do not believe."

It is related from the same person, also, that Allah (swt) had revealed to the Prophet Musa (als): ***“I did not create any creation who are loved by Me that my believing bondsmen not only inflict for him that which is good for him, and I restore him to what is good for him. I am more knowledgeable in what makes right his affairs. So let him be patient upon My afflictions and let him be grateful for all that I bestow upon him. Let him be content with My decree. I will then right among those who are confirmers, those near to Me, if he acts according to what makes Me content and obeys My command.”***

All of our destinies exist because of the way events in our lives unfold and how we interact with them in time. A real Muslim sees perfection and Truth behind their destiny, sees perfection and Truth behind what they are witnessing and living. Each one of us has expectations; each one of us has preferences. If we believe that Allah is perfect, and His way is perfect, and if we base our beliefs on past experiences and the experiences of others that we know, love and respect, then we will know that even if the first impact of the situation is disagreeable, bitter or painful, in the end, we will benefit.

When the mercy of Allah (swt) is seen as an affliction, the remedy lies in our patience. If a person brings themselves to a state of real contentment, the likelihood of that person seeing the benefit of the situation will be even greater. It is related that the Prophet Musa (als) said, **“O my Lord, I am content with Your destiny. You cause the old ones to die and the young ones to continue to live.”** Allah said to Musa: **“O Musa! Are you not content that I am the one who gives provisions?”** Musa replied, **“Yes! You are the best of guardians.”** So we have to learn how to be content with Allah. That means to be content with what God has given us, to gain knowledge from it, to find the balance through it, to bring the Divine Presence near to us. Indeed, even wisdom can come from an understanding of a balance within ourselves, and the balance between this world and the Hereafter.

The seen and the unseen, and all these different worlds are unified in some way. The Prophet Musa (als) sees the perfect relationship between cause and effect, the seen and the unseen. With that understanding, he declares total dependency on God, contentment with Allah for all the provisions known to him or unknown to him, for that which he has received or will receive. We have to remember that in these circumstances of everyday life, in circumstances that challenge our very soul, we have to be patient and persevere, *sabr*. **“Inallaha ma’a saberin. Allah will help those who persevere.” “Inallaha yuhibbus saberin. Allah loves those who are persevering and patient.”** Whose choice is that? It’s our choice. Who we are born to and why we are born is Allah’s (swt) choice. We have choices, too; therefore, *inshā’a-Llāh*, we continue to make the right choices.

Inshā’a-Llāh, we ask Allah’s (swt) indulgence in our ignorance, because we are so conditioned by what we hear about fate and life, and life here and life after. There is no end to the process of seeking the truth. We should never create a goal in our mind that would imply that it will end. This is the secret today: that we have to be patient. We do not know what is coming next. Even if we do, unless we are very well disciplined, we cannot predict what we are going to say or think or do. This first part of the journey for us, which may last 10, 20, 30, 40 years, is to learn how to study properly, to submit, to hear what is being said, to see with our own eyes without judgment, *inshā’a-Llāh*. We pray Allah gives us the wisdom to understand this and follow this way. *Duas*.

O Allah, there are among us those who are not well, who have afflictions. We ask You Allah to turn those afflictions into benefits, to turn those afflictions into confidence and faith, to turn those afflictions to healing. Ya Latif, Ya Latif, Ya Latif, Ya Shaafi, Ya Shaafi, Ya Shaafi. We ask You, Allah, to lift the weights off the hearts, minds and bodies of our beloveds. We ask You to give us all the way to walk this path straight, and to keep our hearts and minds focused. We ask You, Allah, for your miracles, that we might be good servants, and never again to forget our way or wander astray. *Amin*.

SECOND KHUTBA: Duas.