

MERCHANTS OF THE HEREAFTER

Friday Sermon Presented by

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There is a contrast or juxtaposition between salvation and perdition. The one who seeks the perishing is unlike that who seeks the everlasting. The Holy Qur'an describes the people who seek the everlasting and prefer it to the transient saying:

"Those who rehearse the Book of Allah, establish regular Prayer, and spend (in Charity) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly, hope for Commerce that will never fail", i.e., their trade will neither be destroyed nor will it ruined, "For He will pay them their wages, and, He will give them (even) more out of His Bounty: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate (service)" (Fater, v. 29-30).

On the other hand, the Exalted Allah calls Hell 'the house of perdition', i.e., the house of destruction. The opposite of perdition is not the everlasting, for everlasting life is predestined in both, Paradise and Hell, but in Paradise, there are bliss and happiness, a life that is void of any meaning of ruining, destruction or perishing, whereas in Hell there are completely opposite meanings.

The Exalted Allah said:

"Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who have changed the favor of Allah into blasphemy" i.e., they used the favors the Exalted Allah bestowed on

them in something that caused His wrath, instead of exploiting it in seeking the everlasting, **"and caused their people to descend to the house of perdition? Into Hell? they will burn therein, an evil place to stay in"** (Ibrahim, vs. 28-29).

Addressing the hypocrites, the Exalted Allah said:

"Nay, ye thought that the Messenger and the Believers would never return to their families; this seemed pleasing in your hearts, and ye conceived an evil thought, for ye are a people lost (in wickedness). (Al Fath, v. 12), i.e., they are in the ditch of perdition, so they are described as the destroyed.

Accordingly, the Holy Qur'an presents to us two pictures of two groups:

-one group is described as seeking the everlasting: 'they hope for commerce that will never fail',

-another group is described as the perished and that is, they are the people of the house of perdition, Hell, that will cause their destruction.

This classification is considered one of the rare contrasts in the Holy Qur'an. If you look for contrasts in the Holy Qur'an you will learn a lot of useful lessons, especially when the picture is rare and is not repeated frequently in the Holy Qur'an.

The Exalted Allah attributes three characteristics to these people:

I-They rehearse the Book of Allah.

II-They perform prayer.

III-They spend charity, secretly and openly.

Thus, the Exalted Allah does not present a mere abstract picture. He rather gives this picture its moral dimensions as well as its causes and preliminaries.

Three mentioned characteristics are worthy of meditation. No doubt, you all belong to the group who **'hope for Commerce that will never fail'**.

I-**"Those who rehearse the Book of Allah":**

Rehearsing the Holy Qur'an is not intended to mean only frequent recital of this Honored Book, for the Holy Qur'an interprets itself by itself. The Exalted Allah said: **"Those to whom we have sent the Book"**.

Qutadah said, those who "study it (meaning the Holy Qur'an), as it should be studied really believe in it".

Omar IBn Al Khattab (GBH) said: they are those who when they read a verse in which mercy is mentioned, they ask their Lord to bestow it on them, and when they read a verse about torture they seek refuge in Allah from it: **"those who reject Faith therein: the loss is their own"** (Al Baqarah, v.121).

Thus the purpose of rehearsing the Holy Qur'an is to consider the right of this rehearsal, i.e., man's reaction towards every verse. The believer should be influenced by every verse he reads and should have a proper interaction with it. If the verse is a request, he should respond to this request. When the verse is about information, he should honor this information and interact with it. Thus he should be in continual interaction with every verse, and should be

influenced by the verses of this great exalted address he hears.

Referring to the clear proof of how to rehearse the Holy Qur'an, the Exalted Allah said:

"Not all of them are alike: of the People of the Book are a portion that stand (for the right); they rehearse the Signs of Allah all night long, and they prostrate themselves in adoration. They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoy what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in doing (all) good deeds: they are in the ranks of the righteous" (Al Umran,vs. 113-114). In these verses , there is a complete clear picture of how to rehearse the Holy Book of the Exalted Allah.

"of the People of the Book". i.e., those who believed in the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). In this verse, the Exalted Allah praises the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH).

"are a portion that stand (for the right). They rehearse the Signs of Allah all night long". After this statement, one should consider how the Exalted Allah presents the clear proof of reading the Holy Book:

"and they prostrate themselves in adoration"

There is equivocation in this word, for we cannot take the word in its literal meaning because recital of the Holy Qur'an should not be done while one is prostrated, as is agreed upon.

We may ask the question: why does the Exalted Allah say that?

Most of the interpreters of the Holy Qur'an believe that 'prostration' here means 'while they are praying'. In addition, I see that another linguistic meaning of 'prostration' may be added to this word, namely, utmost humbleness to the Exalted Allah, for however man's state is, standing, kneeling, trading, manufacturing, and whether he is in movement or stillness, his heart is in a state of prostration and he is in a state of servitude to the Exalted Allah. Thus he is in continual prostration even if he is standing, and his state, in that case, is like the one who is in prostration in prayer.

"They believe in Allah and the Last Day". This is another explanation of the case of the one who is in eternal accompaniment with the Exalted Allah. He is in earnest hope of meeting the Exalted Allah and of getting bliss on the Last Day.

"Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the praise of Allah" (Al Ahzab, v. 21).

Man's heart should be directed to the Exalted Allah in this way. Once this is done, man appreciates the House of Delight and Bliss. It is Paradise that has been prepared for the pious, for they believe in the Exalted Allah and direct their hearts towards Him. They are eagerly looking forward to the day of meeting the Beloved, and meeting the one who is loved by the Beloved (PBUH).

"They enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong".

They are not the people who live in hermitages reading the Holy Book only, nor are they living in caves or living in seclusion and isolation. They rather interact with the Ummah, with reality and with their environment. They enjoy good deeds because they want the change to the better, and forbid evil deeds because they want the change by making people be away from that evil with all its relations, its connotations and meanings.

"And they hasten in doing (all) good deeds". In this verse, the Exalted Allah describes them as those who hasten to do good deeds, and in another place, He describes them as the foremost:

"And those Foremost (in Faith) will be foremost (in the Hereafter) . These will be those Nearest to Allah" (Al Waqi'a,vs. 10-11)

"they are in the ranks of the righteous" (Al Umran, vs. 113-114).

This is the clear proof of rehearsing the Holy Book.

Those who rehearse the Book of Allah according to this clear proof are in continual prostration, as they believe in the Exalted Allah and the Hereafter, as they enjoy good deeds and forbid evil deeds, and as they hurry to do implicit as well as explicit goodness.

II- The Exalted Allah describes them as **"They perform prayer"**. He does not say 'join prayer'. I have read the Holy Qur'an with the purpose of finding an explanation for the expression 'perform prayer'.

The Holy Qur'an is the source from which we can get invaluable benefit, and the winner, who is the disciple of

the Holy Qur'an, will be affiliated to our master Muhammad (PBUH) too.

By comparison, I found that the Holy Qur'an presents things by degrees. This is a well known phenomenon to whoever reads the Holy Qur'an with meditation. I surveyed the sentence 'they perform prayer' to see the preliminaries that precede it, and listen to what I found the Holy Qur'an say:

1-As to those who hold fast by the book and establish regular prayer" (Al A'raf, v. 170).

That is, briefly speaking, rehearsing of the Holy Book **"Those who rehearse the Book of Allah, establish regular Prayer"** is explained by adhering to it till one assumes the state of the Holy Book. Consequently, whoever attains this state would, by necessity, be a performer of prayer. "

2-Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer" (Al Shura, v. 38). They are not only readers of the Holy Qur'an, but they also respond to it as well. They listen and interact with it.

There is a great difference between the one who reads the Holy Qur'an with the only purpose of relating it, and the one who reads it to hearken, listen and interact with it. In the first verse, The Exalted Allah said they **"hold fast by the book"**, and here, he said they: **"hearken to their Lord"**. So if you want to taste the meaning of performing prayer, you should definitely be of those who hold fast to the Holy Book, and be one of those who respond to their Lord. The one who turns away from the Holy Book, and the one who hears a verse from the Holy Book and then

turns away, disobeys and rebels against it, will not taste the meaning of performing prayer. Only the one who responds to the Exalted Allah will have this blessed feeling.

3-"Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular Prayers" (Al Baqarah, v. 277). The one who has weak faith in his heart, and the one who does not do good deeds, cannot taste the meaning of performing prayer.

4-"but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer" (Al Baqarah, v.177).

Details of faith and good deeds precede performing prayer in the above mentioned verse.

5-Those who patiently persevere, seeking the countenance of their Lord; establish regular Prayers" (Al Ra'd,v. 22). The fidgety and the one who feels bored does not taste the meaning of performing prayer. On the other hand, the patient, the one who is fixed in his faith, the one who waits for the Exalted Allah's promise (and the Exalted Allah never breaks His promise) trusts in the Exalted Allah's promise, and when he is verified by patience, he tastes the meaning of performing prayer, that is when he is verified by and adheres to patience with no feeling of boredom or restlessness, he will enjoy prayer and taste the meaning of performing prayer.

6-"Thou canst but admonish such as fear Their Lord unseen and establish regular Prayer" (Fater, v.18). When there is fear of Allah in the heart of the believer, he will taste the meaning of performing prayer.

Thus, the Holy Qur'an presents to us the preliminaries of performing prayer, so if man wants to be one of the people of performing prayer, he should be verified by these preliminaries.

Then the Exalted Allah moved to the third description:

III-"and spend (in Charity) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly, hope for Commerce that will never fail". This is the saved group that seeks imperishable trade.

Belong to this group that seeks a trade that never fails.

What is the description in this third category?

I have extrapolated two titles from the subject of almsgiving in the Holy Qur'an: the causes of giving alms and its description, i.e., when can man be giving alms, and what is the description of his giving?

A-Causes of almsgiving

1-Sincere will to the Exalted Allah accompanied by satisfied self that makes man steadfast is one of the causes. The Exalted Allah said:

"And the likeness of those who spend their wealth in search of Allah's pleasure".

When the believer is verified by the fact of satisfying the Exalted Allah, not creatures, he would be indifferent to people's opinion, and then he would become steadfast at

times of weal and woe (do not make the satisfaction of creatures your goal, for satisfying people is an unattainable aim). When the aim of satisfying the Exalted Allah exists in the heart of the believer, he can give alms, but when it is the opposite, he cannot do that **"and for the strengthening of their souls"** (Al Baqarah, v.265).

In the beginning, the self incites bad deeds and frustration, but when it becomes satisfied and gets the Exalted Allah's satisfaction, it leads its owner to almsgiving, as it leads him to doing good. Therefore, the Exalted Allah said: **"those will prosper who purify themselves"** (Al a'la, v. 14).

When man has self-purification of himself, and his self becomes well-pleased and well-pleasing to its Lord, that makes its owner be fixed in his faith, so his self leads him to do goodness.

Accordingly, look at your self, and see what quality you can attribute to it. Is your self inciting bad deeds, a reproaching self, or is it that self that is purified and becomes satisfied, well-pleased and well-pleasing?

The first cause is to have sincere will that seeks the satisfaction of the Exalted Allah, with a satisfied self that makes its owner steadfast in his faith.

2-Remembering of the Hereafter

The one who remembers only this life cannot be giving alms. The more distinct the scene of the Hereafter becomes in man's heart, the more charity does he give.

When the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) asked Al Siddik (GBH):

"Oh, Abu Baker, what did you leave for them
(meaning his family)?

Abu Baker said:

"I have left them Allah and his Messenger".

Thus Abu Baker (GBH) was able to spend all his wealth.

The Exalted Allah said: **"Say to my servants"**. See how sweet is this endearing!!

The one who tastes the meaning of this verse will definitely be giving alms.

When the teacher says to his students: "Oh, my beloveds, my children, my friends", he prepares them to listen to his lesson.

Our Great Lord, Exalted is he, addresses his servants by means of His Perfect Servant, the most beloved to Him, Muhammad (PBUH), saying: **"Tell My servants who believe to establish worship and spend of that which We have given them, secretly and publicly, before a day cometh wherein there will be neither mutual bargaining nor befriending"** (Ibrahim, v. 31), i.e., the Exalted Allah wants His Beloved (PBUH) to remind the believers of the Hereafter so that they be encouraged to give alms, and their hearts turn away from adhering to the present life only, because once the heart is attached to the Hereafter, its owner will be able to be promoted, in the scene of his heart, into what is far better than this life.

"And spend something (in Charity) out of the substance which We have bestowed on you, before Death should come to any of you and he should

say, O my Lord! Why didst thou not give me respite for a little while? I should then have given (largely) in Charity, and I should have been one of the doers of good deeds" (Al Munafiqun, v. 10).

The Exalted Allah reminds the disobedient of what he may say at his death.

The first thing the disobedient remembers at his death is: "I wish I had spent", before saying "I wish I had been a doer of good deeds", because at that time he will see how favorable is giving alms and charity. So The first thing he remembers is his wish to be an alms giver, for he will see the honor the Exalted Allah will have prepared for the people who give alms before they die.

After man dies, he waits for his family to give alms out of his money for his soul so that he may receive a present and a favor.

Now you are alive, and your wealth is in your possession, so you can send whatever portion you desire to the Hereafter, why should you wait for your heirs to remember, or forget you after your death in giving alms for your soul?

Thus the first that occurs to man after he dies is: "I wish I had given alms".

The Exalted Allah said:

"The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: it groweth seven ears, and each ear hath a hundred grains. Allah giveth manifold increase to whom he pleaseth: and Allah careth for all and he knoweth

all things. Those who spend their substance in the cause of Allah, and follow not up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury, for them their reward is with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (Al Baqarah, vs. 261-262).

3-Night prayer

The Exalted Allah said:

"Their limbs do forsake their beds of sleep, the while they call on their Lord, in Fear and Hope: and they spend (in Charity) out of the sustenance which we have bestowed on them" (Al Sajdah, v. 16).

The one who does not taste the sweetness of the night prayer, cannot taste the sweetness of giving alms, for night prayer is an incentive for giving alms in the day.

4-Interrelationship and consultation among brethrens are incentives for giving alms because this kind of relationship reminds man of social integration and solidarity. It is the society described by our Prophet (PBUH) as the one consolidated body. The Exalted Allah said:

"who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation" (Al Shura, v. 38).

The Exalted Allah pointed out that what precedes giving alms is interrelation and consultation among the believers where the individual becomes part and parcel of the one integrated and solidified body.

Our Master, Ali (GBH) said:

"Giving twenty Dirham to my brother in Allah is more lovable to me than giving one hundred Dirham to the poor".

5-The feeling of responsibility for one's wealth:

That is, is this wealth completely mine, or I am entrusted with it?

The Exalted Allah said:

"Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend (in Charity) out of the (substance) whereof He has made you heirs" (Al Hadid, v. 7).

When man feels that he is entrusted with this wealth, he will be like the treasurer who is able to spend it with no offense.

The above aforesaid five characteristics, mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, are the causes of giving alms. They are:

Sincere will; a fastening self; remembering the Hereafter; night prayer; interrelationship and consultation among brethren; the feeling of responsibility for wealth.

B-Characteristics of Giving Alms

1-Continuity and duration

The Exalted Allah said:

"Those who (in Charity) spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public".

Giving alms is not a casual act. It is not an immediate behavior, that is, when one listens to a sermon, he is influenced by it, so as a result he gives alms. No, it is rather a fixed state, for the believer moves from the

temporary state into the permanent one, so spending becomes his permanent trait and permanent behavior.

"have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (Al Baqarah, v. 274).

2-Fideism of the starting point, not its materialism.

How can the starting point of giving alms be fiducial and not material?

When it depends on the quantity of the matter, i.e., number and value, it becomes material, but when it depends on promise and what is found at the Exalted Allah, it becomes fiducial.

When it depends on transcendental truth it becomes fiducial, but when it depends on material quantity it becomes material, i.e., when man possesses a lot of money, he gives alms, but when he possesses little money, he does not, because he depends on a material value.

See what the Holy Qur'an said:

"Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of earth, prepared for the righteous. Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity" (Al Umran, vs. 133-134).

Spending is easy when man owns a lot of money as he has plenty of it, but spending in adversity is not so as he has little.

Once, I remember relating to you from this pulpit what the writer of Al Hilyah narrated from the dialogue that took place between Shafiq Al Balkhi and Ibrahim Ibn Adham (GBTH), when Shafiq said to Ibrahim:

"When we are provided with subsistence, we eat, and we are not, we become patient".

Ibrahim retorted:

"No, Shafiq, this is what the dogs of Balakh do. When we are provided with subsistence, we prefer the others to ourselves, and if we are not, we feel gratitude and thanks".

3-Choice of type

Man finds it easy to spend what he dislikes, i.e., what is left over, but when we read the description of giving alms in the Holy Qur'an, we find that it is the opposite of this perception:

"O ye who believe! give of the good things which ye have (honorably) earned" (Al Baqarah, v. 267).

"By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love; and whatever ye give, of a truth Allah knoweth it well" (Al Umran, v. 92).

Thus spending should be based on choice of type, not according to self-whims. It should be satisfying to the Exalted Allah.

This is the group that hopes for a trade that will never fail. In the Holy Qur'an, they are described as:

"Those who rehearse the Book of Allah, establish regular Prayer, and spend (in Charity) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly, hope for Commerce that will never fail. For He will pay them their wages (the Exalted Allah will recompense them with excess that agrees with His favor, His Exaltation and Greatness), "and, He will give them (even) more out of His Bounty: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate (service).(Fater, vs. 29-30).

Allahum...make us from those who hope for a trade that never fails, and make us from those who listen to wisdom and follow the best of it.

I say my words, and ask Allah's forgiveness.