



Synopsis of Friday Sermon

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IONA
REPENTANCE
REVITALIZATION OF FAITH
RENEWAL OF COVENANT

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Synopsis of the Friday Sermon

Purity - Part 5 The Bargain

The concluding sermon on the subject of “Purity” deals with the practical manifestation of selling oneself for Paradise. The hadith ends with the words, “everyone leaves in the morning selling himself. He either emancipates or destroys himself.” The noble companions affirmatively responded to a deal that was negotiated with the Prophet (SAW). They sold themselves and their properties in exchange for Paradise. Ayah 111 and 112 of surah al-Tawbah discuss this bargain in detail.

Although surah al-Tawbah is a Medinan surah, ayahs 111 and 112 are Meccan. They were revealed in the 13th year after Muhammad (SAW) became a Prophet. The deal, purchase agreement and the legal contract of what is sold and for what price between Allah (SWT) and the believers, are included in these profound ayat.

“Verily, Allah has purchased from the believers their souls and their properties in exchange for Paradise. They fight in the way of Allah; they kill and are killed. [This is] a true promise binding on Him in the Torah (taurat), the Gospel (Injil) and the Qur’an. And who is more faithful to his promise than Allah? So, rejoice then in the bargain which you have concluded. For that indeed is the supreme achievement. [They are] those who turn to Allah in repentance; who serve and praise Him; who (do siyabah) fast; bow down and prostrate themselves; who enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong and who preserve the limits of Allah. And give [O Prophet] good news to such believers” (al-Tawbah, 9:111,112).

Understanding the context of these ayat will help us make sense of the prophet’s statement, “everyone leaves in the morning selling himself. He either emancipates or destroys himself.” The year after the Prophet’s utter disappointment with the people of al-Ta’if, six men from al-Madinah (then, Yathrib) who heard about Allah’s Messenger, Muhammad (SAW) and his message met with him in a place called al-Aqabah after the Hajj season (al-‘Aqabah is where pillars representing satan are situated in Mina today). After accepting Islam, they pledged to spread the word in al-Madinah. True to their promise, Islam and the Prophet of Islam became the talk of the town.

The following year (12th year after prophethood) after the Hajj season, five of the six men in addition to seven others met with the Prophet of Allah (SAW) at the same place, al-‘Aqabah, and accepted Islam. Before leaving for al-Madinah they requested from the Prophet (SAW) that he send someone with them to teach them the religion. Mus’ab Bin Umair (RAA) was chosen by the Prophet (SAW) to be his ambassador in al-Madinah and taught the Qur’an and the message of *la ilaha illallah*, there is no god but Allah, to the residents of al-Madinah.

Once again at al-‘Aqabah and in the following year the Prophet (SAW) received a delegation of 70 men from the Yathrib tribes of Aws and Khazraj. They pledged their oath of allegiance to the Prophet (SAW) on two conditions: one; that they worship Allah alone and not associate anything with Him, and two; that they support and protect Muhammad (SAW) as they would protect their own lives, property, and children. They inquired, “What will we get in return if we fulfill these two conditions?” The Prophet (SAW) replied, “You will get Paradise.” They exclaimed, “This is a profitable transaction. We will not revoke it, nor will we resign it.”

The Madinese struck a deal with the Prophet (SAW). The two ayat from surah al-Tawbah were then revealed in the form of a barter transaction, i.e. a trade agreement using business terminology. *“Verily, Allah has purchased from the believers their souls and their properties in exchange for Paradise... So, rejoice then in the bargain which you have concluded. For that indeed is the supreme achievement.”* Selling oneself to Allah (SWT) in return for Paradise is indeed the biggest success.

In the second year after *hijrah* (migration), those who pledged themselves to the Prophet (SAW) had to prove their loyalty to the contract. They had to face the polytheists at a place called Badr outside of al-Madinah. “*Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged and, verily, Allah has indeed the power to succor them*” (al-Hajj, 22:39). The first battle to be fought solely in the path of Allah (SWT) came to be known as the battle of Badr. Those who fought in the ranks of the believers and were killed went straight to Paradise cashing in on the bargain they made.

Over 14 centuries have passed since these events took place. One may ask, are we ready to make such a bargain with Allah (SWT)? And if so, what are the practical steps one needs to take to cash in on the bargain? The first thing we must do is consciously probe ourselves and determine what we really want out of this earthly life then ask, “Do I want material or real success?” Unless we reflect, assess, and be loyal to ourselves and honestly answer that question we will continue to fall prey to the ploy of Satan. We think, ‘because I am a Muslim I am going to Paradise.’ The Qur’an calls this mindset wishful thinking. Paradise is not to be wished for. Paradise is to be earned. We must earn it if we desire it. The noble companions did, and we can too.

If one genuinely wants Paradise then the surest way that guarantees the attainment of felicity and success in the hereafter is to simply sell himself to Allah (SWT). Once this decision is taken the rest is a matter of delivering the goods to the seller, i.e. Allah (SWT).

There are three main installments in the transaction. One; change in attitude, two; devotion through worship, and three; serving Allah’s cause. These three categories, each with three subcategories, are explicated in the following ayah, “[*The believers are*] those who turn to Allah in repentance; who serve (make Ibadah) and praise Him; who (do *siyahab*) fast; who bow down and prostrate themselves; who enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong and who preserve the limits of Allah. And give [O Prophet] good news to such believers” (al-Tawbah, 9:112).

In other words, the seller must possess all nine attributes discussed in the ayah. They are grouped as follows:

1) **Change in attitude:** This is the most essential of all. It is the very foundation and basic requirement of a faithful believer.

a) **Repentance (Tawbah):** Repentance is not only the act of saying, “I seek forgiveness from Allah” repeatedly, rather it is an attitude. It is about one’s feelings and thoughts toward his/her actions. Recognizing our shortcomings and sins, one’s attitude should be, “I seek forgiveness from my Lord and I turn back to him in repentance with utmost sincerity.” Such an attitude reflects the acknowledgment of one’s own sins, full remorse of the heart, repetitive requests for forgiveness from the almighty Allah (SWT), immediate cessation of sins and the intention to never return to sinning again.

b) **Devotion or servitude (Ibadah):** The term *Ibadah* is often mistakenly translated to worship. It is indeed more than just the modes of worship (*Ibadaat*). *Ibadah* or servitude, more accurately slavery, is about one’s relationship with and feelings toward his/her creator. The correct attitude is that one should be a humble loving slave of Allah (SWT). One must realize that he/she is owned by Him and must completely and willingly submit to His will and be subservient to His commands. One must accept Islam in its entirety, not partially. One must recognize that he/she was created strictly to obey *the Master*, “*I have not created the Jinn and humans except to serve (make Ibadah to) Me*” (al-Zariyat, 51:56)

c) **Praise (Hamd):** The inevitable result of a sincere servant of Allah (SWT) who goes through the promised trials and tribulations is always *hamd*, *al-Hamdulillah*, praise be to God. Again, praise or *hamd* is not the act of saying, *al-Hamdulillah*, rather it is how the soul feels about Allah (SWT). Not only should the tongue praise Allah (SWT), the heart and every joint in one’s body must glorify and praise Him. We must be grateful for everything he has given and *not* given us. He alone deserves to always be thanked and praised.

2) **Devotion through worship:** after a change in attitude or inward reverence to the Creator, we move to outward modes of worship often referred to as actions of the limbs.

a) **Optional fast:** The ayah mentions the word *al-Sa’ihoon*, translated literally as those who journey. The Prophet (SAW) mentioned that, “the journey (*siyahab*) of my ummah is fasting.” The believers in al-Madinah were requested by the Prophet (SAW) to keep an optional fast, a custom that was not only new but difficult. Fasting strengthened the believers, taught them self-restraint and helped them endure long hours without food, particularly when they had to engage the idolaters of Makkah in war on the seventeenth day of Ramadan in the second year A.H. This is when fasting the entire month of Ramadan became a compulsory act of worship.

b & c) **Bowing and Prostrating:** These two attributes which occur frequently in the Qur'an denote the mandatory devotional acts of worship such as salah, zakah, sawm, and hajj. The formal acts of worship connect one with his/her Creator, strengthen the bond of mutual love and develop constant awareness of God. Fulfilling these religious duties give the believer the spiritual growth and strength necessary to carry out higher aims to serve Allah's cause.

3) **Serving the Cause of Allah:** serving Allah's cause entails serving humanity while protecting the rights of the almighty Allah (SWT).

a & b) **Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong;** (Amr bil-Ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-Munkar): This doctrine is essential to public order. Promoting all that is good and virtuous while simultaneously rooting out evil from society promotes peace of mind and a safe community, society and country. This duty of serving humanity is placed on the shoulders of Muslims, *"You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah"* (Aal Imran, 3:110). The authentic hadith of the Prophet (SAW) mentions that, "Whoever among you sees an evil, he must change it with his hand; if he is unable to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is unable to do so, then with his heart; and that is the weakest form of Faith" (al-Bukhari and Muslim).

c) **Preserving the limits of Allah (SWT):** The boundaries set by Allah (SWT) that define our shar'iah must never be crossed. The Qur'an asserts, *"These are the limits ordained by Allah; so, do not transgress them. And those who transgress the limits of Allah are the unjust ones"* (al-Baqarah, 2:229). Allah's limits must be protected and defended with lives and possessions. Anyone who disturbs the peace, causes mischief, or usurps the rights of Allah (SWT) should be brought to justice. A just social order based on divine injunctions deserves Allah's favors and bounties, *"These are the limits set by Allah. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide there forever, and that is the supreme success"* (al-Nisa', 4:13).

A believer who is willing to strike a deal with Allah (SWT) must agree to deliver the above detailed agreement of sale to the Purchaser, Allah (SWT), in return for the priceless Paradise. Unlike a cash bargain where one immediately cashes in on a business deal, this trade appears to be a credit bargain. In other words, one must deliver the goods here in this mortal life in order to be compensated in the hereafter.

To remove any doubts from the minds of those considering such a trade, Allah (SWT) says, *"[This is] a true promise binding on Him in the Torah (taurat), the Gospel (Injil) and the Qur'an. And who is more faithful to his promise than Allah?"* (al-Tawbah, 9:111). In other words, a similar bargain was made with the former nations, the followers of Moses (AS) and was mentioned in their scripture. Similarly, the bargain was made to the followers of Jesus (AS) and was mentioned in their scripture, and now in the Qur'an as well, for the followers of Muhammad (SAW) to consider.

Those whose hearts and minds are attached to this provisional world will have no one to blame but themselves on a day when neither wealth nor children will be of any use. Those who render their lives and wealth for the eternal bliss will have a different account. *"Rejoice in the bargain which you have concluded, for that indeed is the supreme achievement"* (al-Tawbah, 9:111).

The sage Hasan al-Basri (RA), once said, "Behold, what a profitable business is this that Allah has thrown open to every believer." He also said, "It is Allah who has blessed you with wealth and property. Spend a little out of it and buy Paradise."

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