Surah Al-Qalam

الله ﷺ

Allah’s love is the most precious gift which we all yearn for but it cannot be attained without following the footsteps of our beloved Prophet (s.a.w) with complete love and trust. The more we know about his life and personality, the more we will love him for all his magnificent qualities. This love is the completion of our faith, and is absolutely essential for us to acquire; because without love and faith, actions are just mechanical gestures which have no spirit and no effect.

The first and foremost requirement of loving the Prophet (s.a.w) is to follow his way of life and to convey his teachings to the whole world. This is a responsibility on all of us who feel honoured to be his followers. But this path is filled with trials and only those can walk upon it, who first learn to be patient and calm, forgiving and moving on, loving people unconditionally and putting the work of religion ahead of their own satisfactions. In fact, those who love Allah love to work for Him and feel honoured to be given any opportunity to serve Him. If someone has truly felt this love, then he will never complain nor be overtaken by any self pity or self righteousness... because he knows that what he is working for is far more precious than his own life...

So in Surah Al-Qalam, Allah is giving us the excellent example of our Prophet (s.a.w) who put up with all the trials and accusations from the disbelievers with the utmost patience and perseverance. Although the Prophet (s.a.w) ignored all the malicious remarks of the disbelievers but Allah is taking oath for the sake of His beloved Messenger:

ن وَالْقَلمَ وَمَا يَسْتَطُروْنَ {١} مَا أَنتَ بِعَمَّا رَبُّكَ بِمِتْحَنِّهِنَّ {٢}

Nün. By the pen and what they write. By the grace of your Lord you are not a madman.

This oath of the pen makes me feel that there must be something really great in this small little tool but we take it so casually. Today most of us feel too lazy to write but where would we be if the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w) had not used the pen? Thus writing is Ibaadah if done for the sake of Allah. And we should use this immense power of pen to spread the ultimate truth to the whole world.

But apart from the pen and other means of communication there is one other tool which is the most precious, the most effective and the most worthy of honour... and that is the excellence of character. If we study the life history of our Prophet (s.a.w) we find that He had
the best manners, not only with friends, not only in good times, but also with enemies, He
displayed extraordinary patience and tolerance... that is why Allah has promised for him a
reward which is limitless:

وَإِنَّ لَكَ نَأَحْرَزَكَ غَيْرَ مَمْثَلٍ {3} وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَّيْنَ خَلَقٌ عَظِيمٍ {4}

And you shall have a never ending reward. You are of the highest noble character.

Although it is a topic which cannot be encompassed in just a few lines, but the most
important thing about the personality of our Prophet (s.a.w) was that all his manners were
genuine and ever present. His etiquettes and behaviour had no contradiction with His real
self. That is why He had an awesome personality which affected others like magic. The hard
hearted pagans tried to prove that He was a magician but they could not comprehend that
there is no magic like the magic of tenderness, true love and care.

On the contrary, today we find that people are attracted to Islam but they are confused when
they see the unpleasant behaviour of the followers of this great religion. We might have
learned the Quran and Hadith but we need to do a lot of work on our character building too.
And the best characteristics which we have to focus on are patience and tolerance. What is
the use of thinking yourself as good and proving everybody else to be wrong? The task of
judgement is not for us...

إِنْ رَبُّكُ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينِ {7}

Surely it is your Rabb Who knows those who have strayed from His Way, as He knows best
those who are rightly guided.

It has always been the case that those who reject the truth are greater in number than the
believers. So there is a great danger of being influenced by the force of the majority. Thus
Allah has cautioned the Prophet (s.a.w):

فَلَا تُطِعُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ {8} وَلَوْ نَدْهِنَ فَقَدْ هَيْبَتُ {9}

So do not yield to the unbelievers. They desire you to compromise a little, so they too would
compromise.

Now this is a very important point to remember that being kind hearted does not mean that
one should compromise on religion for the pleasure of others. So we should be good and
caring for others but remain firmly within the limits of Allah. Sometimes people will try to
dissuade you from your work by indirect means. Thus we have to be even more careful in
this case...
Neither yield to any mean oath-monger; mischief making slanderer; opponent of good, transgressor.

When people are given a blessing they often think that it is because they have “earned” it and don’t realize that it is a test from Allah. Or in some cases they don’t even realize that they have been given a great gift which is for their own good. The disbelievers of Makkah were also deceived by their own arrogance, and failed to appreciate the gift of Quran and guidance through the greatest Messenger of all times. In the next verse Allah reminds them of a story which was quite famous among the Arabs:

Surely We shall try them as We tried the owners of the garden when they swore that they would pluck its fruit the next morning.

This story is about the owner of a garden who used to divide his fruit in three portions; giving one third to the poor and needy, one third to his relatives and kept the remaining for himself and his family. Due to his sharing, Allah gave abundant blessings to him but when he died, his inheritors decided to keep all the fruit to themselves because they thought that it was their own hard work and their own earning. So they planned to harvest it early in the morning before any poor folk could come to beg. But Allah sent a punishment while they were asleep and the garden was totally destroyed:

So a calamity from your Rabb came down upon it (the garden) while they slept. and by the morning it lay as if it had been already harvested.

When early the next morning they reached the garden they couldn’t believe what they saw:

But when they saw the garden, they cried: “Surely we must have lost our way!

Then they realized that it was a result of their own arrogance and stinginess:

Finally they said: “Woe to us! Surely we had become rebellious.

The loss of this world can be recovered but what will happen in the Akhirah? When there will be no more chances?
Such is the punishment in this life; but the punishment in the Hereafter is even greater, if they but knew it.

In this world anyone can plant a garden and enjoy its fruits but the gardens of paradise are only for those who have lived a life of extreme caution and carefulness. They fear to disobey Allah; they fear to utter foolish words, they are forever conscious of the result of Akhirah:

Surely the righteous will be rewarded with gardens of delight by their Rabb

But the disbelievers will mock them and go on with their carefree lives, not thinking about the simple fact that those who obey Allah and those who break His limits cannot be equal:

What do the disbelievers think? Shall We treat the Muslims as We treat the guilty? What is the matter with you? What kind of Judgment do you make?

We make decisions on the basis of our intellect and after that the next source of our knowledge is through books. So Allah is asking the disbelievers:

Or do you have a Book in which you read, that you shall be given whatever you choose?

If neither intellect nor books can testify to their foolish judgement, then maybe they have signed a sworn covenant - a covenant binding on Us till the Day of Resurrection - that you shall have whatever you demand?

The problem is that they don’t want to give up their lifestyles and have refused to bow down to Allah. How many of us have established Salah in our lives? We continue to be casual about this obligatory worship but look at the next verse and you will feel the enormity of this error:

On the Day of Judgment, when the dreadful events shall be unfolded, and they shall be asked to prostrate themselves, they shall not be able to do so.
It can also refer to those who pray regularly but their hearts do not bow down to Allah’s greatness. Why? Because they are too much filled up with their own pride. What will become of this false pride when our real picture will be exposed to all of mankind?

They shall stand with eyes downcast, utterly humble; because during their safe and sound earthly life they were called upon to prostrate themselves but they refused to do so.

This ayat teaches me the importance of self awareness. I have to focus on all my flaws and remove them with Allah’s help so that I might be saved from this torture of shame, regret and humiliation. If this feeling gets absorbed in my heart and I start working on my self-purification then how can I have any time or concern to blame anyone else or to find fault with others?

Imagine how our Prophet (s.a.w) must be receiving these strong verses... how awesome was his responsibility and how painful it must have been for him that when he conveyed it to the Makkans they constantly rejected him... Thus Allah is sending him the comforting words that if people are not accepting the truth then He will Himself deal with them:

O Prophet, leave to Me those who reject this revelation. We shall lead them step by step to their ruin, in ways that they cannot perceive.

But the Prophet (s.a.w) was so kind hearted... so much full of love and concern for his people. He could not ignore what was happening around him. He was not like us that we just think of our own end and don’t worry about the others. Thus Allah assures Him:

So wait with patience for the Judgment of your Rabb and be not like the man of the fish (reference is to the Prophet Younus (a.s) who was swallowed by a fish), who cried when he was in distress.

Prophet Younus (a.s) was also rejected by his people and he was so grieved by their disbelief that he decided to leave them before the order had come from Allah. But when he was swallowed by the fish, he realized his mistake and asked Allah’s forgiveness. So in this story there is great lesson for us that even if we are facing tremendous difficulties in the way of Allah, we should remain firm and never lose hope. Sometimes the emotions of grief and anger makes a person feel totally helpless and drained. Shaitan uses such chances to make us despair of Allah’s mercy. And so there is great danger of making wrong decisions.
As far as people are concerned, different people will respond to Allah’s message in different ways. Some will believe wholeheartedly and become strong supporters, some will be on the middle course, and some will be so hostile that their hatred will be reflected in their expressions. Just like the people of Makkah:

وَإِن يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَفَرُوكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمَعْوَا الْذِّكْرِ وَيَغُولُونَ إِنَّهُ لَمَجْهَنُونَ

The unbelievers would almost trip you up with their eyes when they hear Our revelations (The Qur’an), and say: “He (Muhammad) is surely crazy.”

But even if the disbelievers labelled the Quran as false, or fabricated, but they could not extinguish the light of Allah’s words which was destined to illuminate the worlds:

وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ذُكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

This (The Qur’an) is nothing but a Reminder to all the people of the world.

Thus ends the beautiful Surah with a great reminder that Quran is for the whole world so we have to fulfil our responsibility of conveying it to everyone. Allah has given us so many resources and the only thing we really need is a true commitment... because even if someone is unable to go out and reach people, we do have one thing which can cross the barriers of time and space... and that is the pen... Al-Qalam!!