

Surah Al-Jumu'ah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

You must have heard a lot of people saying that although they believe in the religion of Allah, but these days it has become virtually impossible to adhere to this way of life. "After all we have to live in society and look at where the world is going. How can we go back to the teachings of 1400 years ago while everyone is moving forward?"

When I hear this excuse, my mind always turns to the fact that when Allah sent His Quran with its eternal message and appointed His Messenger (s.a.w) to be the best example for the whole of mankind for all times to come, didn't Allah know that a time would come when the majority would ridicule this concept of following the traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w) and insist that Islam has to be modified according to the requirements of this modern world? Is the development of the people and the world, a surprising thing for Allah? No of course not...His knowledge is complete and all encompassing and He knows all the past, present and future issues of this world and its inhabitants. Still if He sent the Quran and declared it to be our guide regardless of time and space then surely it must have the completeness and timelessness, which if cannot see, then it is our own lack of comprehension or the cover of a lot of prejudice which has been piled up on our hearts through the propaganda of all anti Islamic forces. The only way you can really see the true picture is to recognize that your opinions are not entirely original. The ideas that you have about things are just a summary of all that you have been reading or listening or an essence of all your observations through life. If you have been living mostly with staunch believers of Allah and hearing His praises and watched people worshipping Him, then there will be a natural tendency in you to believe in Allah and to worship Him alone. On the other hand if you have been listening to a lot of anti Islamic stuff, then your faith will be shaky too. This human tendency to follow the trends and to be influenced by the environment is something which we cannot take lightly. That is why all these last Surahs have this fundamental message of unity among believers. The more we stay close to one another the more will be the strengthening of our faith, and the easier it will be to follow the right way of life.

Allah's religion and His laws are eternal and the whole universe is a manifestation of this fact. Look at the creation of Allah...everything is working tirelessly and perpetually in a most efficient way. The night and the day, the coming and going of seasons, life and death...all are the signs of Allah's perfection...

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوسِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ {1}

All that is in the heavens and earth declares the glory of Allah, the King, the Holy, the Mighty, the Wise

If we contemplate on the amazing miracles in the universe, we recognize the absolute power of Allah and immediately you feel the softening of the heart when you think of how Allah has made so many things for us and given us so many blessings both in our own creation as well as the outward blessings like food and water and shelter. Our hearts bow down in gratitude for all his favours which we need for our existence, but we never think of the ONE BIG FAVOUR without which our whole existence would have been meaningless...Allah reminds us of that in the next verse:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ {2}

It is He Who has raised among the unlettered people a Rasool (messenger) of their own, who recites to them His revelations, purifies them, and teaches them the Book and Wisdom, though prior to this they were in gross error,

We have to understand that although material blessings are important because they are essential for our survival in this world; but the spiritual blessing of Islam brought to us through our beloved Prophet (s.a.w) is the most valuable gift from Allah. It was the miracle of the Quran and Sunnah which transformed the unlettered Arabs into great intellectuals and leaders of the world. But this miracle did not happen by itself. You can read the History and see how our beloved Prophet (s.a.w) and His blessed companions went through unimaginable trials and sacrifices to uphold the religion of Allah... until at last Allah gave them victory. It is a history of persistent hard work and perseverance in the face of all sorts of hardships. Therefore if today we want to rise back to our honourable status in the world as the chosen nation, then we have to get out of our comfortable illusions and self created theories and remind ourselves that we are the representatives of Allah's message in this world. To serve this purpose we need to apply the four step program for education and self development as stated in the above ayah:

1) **Reading of Quran**....correct reading of Allah's words makes the desired impact on the heart so we need to put in a serious effort to learn the tilawah in the same way as taught to us by the Prophet (s.a.w).

2) **Self purification**...it would be a fruitless exercise to paint from the outside while the inner self is corrupt due to years of neglect. Therefore a proper training is needed to get rid of the bad characteristics and develop good habits and attitude.

3) **Learning the Quran**... Reading is the first step but it should be closely followed by the understanding of the verses. Knowledge is the key to guidance.

4) **Learning the wisdom and knowledge of Hadith**... This would teach us how to put our knowledge into practise; in other words we have to learn the practical implementation of Islam.

These days with the advancement in science and technology, it has become so easy to acquire this knowledge. There is a world of resources and as they say, everything is just a click away! But even with all the ease of availability, only those can get it who really want to be guided and out of those who get this knowledge only those can really benefit from it who act upon it...

ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ {4}

That is the grace of Allah, which He bestows on whom He pleases. Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.

If you give a valuable gift to someone and he throws it to one side, not caring for its worth; what would you call such a person except that he is crazy...similarly if we don't value the magnificent treasure of Quran and Hadith, then we are equally senseless in Allah's eyes. Allah gives the example of the nation who was given the guidance of Torah but they did not implement it in their lives:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا
بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ {5}

The example of those who were given the Taurāt, but then they failed to carry out their obligations, is that of a donkey who is carrying books *and does not know what is in those books*. Bad is the example of those who deny the revelations of Allah. Allah does not guide the wrongdoers

Although this verse has been revealed in the context of the Jews, who prided themselves to be the recipients and scholars of the Torah, while their lives were totally devoid of its teachings; but in fact it is warning for us, that if we also ignore the real purpose of Quran then just being the bearers of this great book will not make us great in Allah's eyes.

Why don't we feel the need to act upon the Quran? Is it because we are so sure of our salvation? The Jews too had this false pride that they were the favourites of Allah and the Paradise had been reserved only for them. So Allah is asking them that if their claim is true then why are they so much afraid of death?

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ هَادُوا إِن زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ لِلَّهِ مِنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
{6} وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْت أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ {7}

Say: "O you, the Jews! If you claim that you are the favourites of Allah to the exclusion of other people, then wish for death if what you say is true." But, because of what their hands have sent before *them for the Hereafter*, they will never wish for death. Allah knows these wrongdoers very well

We as Muslims are also affected by this contradiction. On one hand we think that we will definitely be going to Jannah because we read the kalimah and we are the nation of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) and on the other hand we prefer this world over the hereafter and live like we are going to be here forever... Allah says:

قُلْ إِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِي تَفِرُّونَ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مُلَاقِيكُمْ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ {8}

Tell them: "The death from which you are running away, will surely overtake you: then you will be sent back to Him Who knows the unseen and the seen; and He will tell you all that you have been doing.

"Running from death" does not necessarily mean physically avoiding it but it also refers to the mental detachment from the fact that our life is going to end. We make so many plans for this life which might or might not happen yet we prepare for those things wholeheartedly. On the contrary we are totally carefree about the one and only thing which is most certain and will happen to all of us; and that is death. We avoid this reality so much that we don't even want to hear about it... How often do we think about the possibility of death when we lie down to sleep and ask Allah for forgiveness because it might be the last chance to do so? How many times before we hurt someone do we think that this might be the last chance that we are both alive so I should open my heart for him before it is too late? The more you think about death as something hanging in the air and waiting to catch you, the more likely it is that you will give up all your negative ideas about Allah or Allah's religion or Allah's creatures. This positive attitude will enable the believers to join together with forgiveness and acceptance of each other. Although the five daily prayers teach us unity and brotherhood but this lesson is specially reinforced in the Friday prayer:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ {9}

O believers! When the call for Salah (*prayer*) is made on Friday (*the day of congregational prayers*), hasten to the remembrance of Allah and cease your business. That is better for you if you but knew

This ayah is a great reminder of the importance of the Friday prayer, and it also gives the formula for balance in our deen and duniya...(the religious and worldly affairs) This again, is a question on which there is a lot of confusion, as to what is more important; deen or duniya? Allah is teaching us the correct balance that the priority for an action is to be decided according to the time. It means that when it is time for the Prayer then you stop all other activity and get to the masjid. But then as soon as the prayer is over then get back to your jobs:

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ {10}

When you finish the Salah, then disperse through the land and seek the bounty of Allah (*go back to your normal business*). And remember Allah greatly, so that you may prosper.

Notice the difference between the two commands: when you go to masjid you leave your business behind but when you go back to your businesses then don't leave Allah behind...rather remember Him even more. It shows that our real purpose is to worship Allah but to do other jobs is just a necessity; and so, while we are busy in the tasks of this world we should remember Allah a lot so that we might not forget the real objective of our existence.

Now compare this to our own attitude...aren't we doing just the opposite? While in duniya we totally forget Allah, and when we are in worship we still keep remembering the worldly affairs. This is our weakness but we have to keep trying and shift our focus to the actual goal. Allah gives the example of some people in Madinah who were still in the early years of their education in Islam. It was Friday and they were in the masjid attending the sermon of the Prophet (s.a.w). When they heard the coming of a caravan that had brought food and other stuff, they rushed to the sound of its drum because there had been a drought in the city and no food was available locally...

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا تِجَارَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا انفَضُّوا إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَائِمًا قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهْوِ وَمِنَ التِّجَارَةِ
وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ {11}

Those who are still weak in Imān (faith), when they see some bargain or some sport they rush to it and leave you standing. O Prophet declare to them that what Allah has in store for them is far better than any sport and bargain, and Allah is the best provider.

Even though these people had gone to fulfil a rightful need yet Allah is reminding us that no need is so urgent that you neglect your worship for it...because after all who can fulfil our needs except Allah and how can we expect to be fulfilled when we neglect the one who is the provider of everything...??

Look around yourself and observe the dissatisfaction written on the faces of people. They might have all the luxuries of this world but they are unfulfilled...why? The reason is that they have forgotten Allah and His obedience. Our hearts cannot find peace without it. So remember Allah greatly and remember the message of this Surah...which is to recognize the beautiful gift of Islam and to use it in our lives and also enrich the lives of all the others with its beauty. May Allah help us to act on what we have learned...Ameen