

# Friday Sermon: Seeking Nearness to Allah

May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih said that in the past few weeks he has been giving discourses with reference to extracts of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) on ways of attaining knowledge and understanding of God, love of God and the reality of the Being of God. In today's sermon Huzoor presented extracts from this scholarly treasure regarding some ways to attain Divine nearness, their significance and the Promised Messiah's (on whom be peace) expectations from his Jama'at.

Explaining that in order to find God it is important to have the insight and perception that real piety is in the Being of God and piety comes from Him alone and it can be attained by abiding by His teaching which in turn grants one Divine nearness and blessings, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote:

'In the real sense no one is pious except God Almighty, all high morals and all pieties are in Him in their entirety. As much as one breaks free of one's nafs (self) and one's desires and gains nearness to God, one is able to reflect Divine qualities in his person accordingly. Whatever qualities and true refinement one attains is by virtue of Divine nearness. And so it should be since creation is nothing on its own accord. The reflection of high Divine morals reflects on the hearts of those people alone who follow the Holy Qur'an perfectly. And true experience shows that the kind of high morals which are replete with pure and clear spiritual discernment and love emanate from these people and they are incomparable in the world. Indeed, anyone can make verbal claims and everyone can boast, but only these people successfully negotiate the rather narrow passageway of true experience. If others show high morals, it is out of formality and pretence. They hide their foulness and conceal their maladies and exhibit false refinement. Their veneer comes off in trivial trials. They often consider exhibiting high morals out of formality and pretence because they deem the success of everything to do with their life and living in this. If they were to follow their inner foulness all the time, it would interfere in their escapades in life. Although they have some inherent seed of morality in them, but most of the time it is suppressed under the barbs of selfish desires and is made evident only with the adulteration of their vested interests and not purely for the sake of Allah...Only those take this inherent quality of goodness to its excellence who become God's. Seeing their souls completely free of fondness for all else God fills them with His pure morals and makes them love those morals as much as He Himself loves them. As mortals they attain a status of Divine morals in a sense that they become instruments of God through which He demonstrates His morals and finding them thirsty and hungry, He makes them drink the lucid, pure water of His special fountain.' (Barahin e Ahmadiyya, Part 4, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 1, footnote, pp. 541-542)

Explaining the concept of hypocrisy that the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) has mentioned above, Huzoor said Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) recounted that once an assembly of educated people belonging to high society decided to have air of informality in their gathering and this informality resulted in all manner of crass and absurd conduct exhibiting; indeed their veneer came off.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote about Divine nearness:

'God Almighty is not deceived, He only makes those His friends who swim in the river of His love naturally like fish, who become His and are completely devoted to obeying Him. A truthful person can never say that everyone apart from God Almighty is impure and neither anyone has been purified nor will be purified. As if God Almighty created His servants in vain. Real spiritual knowledge expresses that it is the way of Allah from the very start with mankind that He has purified those who love Him. Indeed, God Almighty is the fountain of true purity and pureness. God Almighty puts His quality in those who are engaged in His remembrance through

zikh, worship and love and thus they also partake this purity in a reflective way; the purity which is inherent in the Being of God Almighty.’ (Satt Bachan, Ruhani Khaza’in, Vol. 10, p. 210)

Explaining that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) is the means and model to attain high moral, piety and Divine nearness, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote: ‘We also believe that even the lowest stage of the straight path cannot become available to a person without following the Holy Prophet [peace and blessings of Allah be on him] let alone the higher stages of that path. We cannot attain to any stage of honour and perfection or of nearness to God except through the true and perfect following of the Holy Prophet [peace and blessings of Allah be on him]. Whatever is bestowed upon us is by way of reflection and through the Holy Prophet [peace and blessings of Allah be on him]. (Izala-e-Auham, Ruhani Khaza’in, Vol. 3, p. 170, Essence of Islam, Vol. 1. p. xxxi)

What is the reality of Islam and how should a Muslim be, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) expounded:

‘The reality of Islam is to present one’s neck to God like the sacrificial lamb; to give up one’s own designs and to be devoted to the designs of God and His pleasure; to lose oneself in God and to impose a type of death upon oneself; to be dyed in the personal love of God and to obey Him entirely for the sake of that love; to obtain eyes that see only through Him, and to obtain ears that hear only through Him, and to develop a heart that should be wholly devoted to Him, and to obtain a tongue which would speak only at His command. This is a stage where all search ends; human faculties complete their functions and man’s ego dies completely. Thereupon Divine mercy confers a new life upon the seeker through His living words and His shining light. He is honoured with the delightful converse of God. A fine light, which is not discoverable by reason and is not recognizable by the eyes, approaches close to his heart, as is said by God:

‘...and We are nearer to him than *even his jugular vein*.’ ([50:17](#))

In this manner, God honours mortal man with His nearness. Then the time comes when blindness is removed and eyes are given insight and man beholds God with his new eyes, hears His voice and finds himself wrapped in the mantle of His light. Thus, the purpose of religion is fulfilled and having beheld God, man casts aside the dirty garment of his lower life and puts on a garment of light. He waits for a sight of God and of heaven not merely as a promise to be fulfilled in the hereafter, but in this very life.’ (Lecture Lahore, Ruhani Khaza’in, Vol. 20, pp. 160 – Essence of Islam, Vol. 1. pp. 19-20)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote about Istighfar (seeking forgiveness from God):

‘*Istighfar* which strengthens the roots of faith, has been defined by the Holy Quran in two ways. The first meaning of *Istighfar* is to stop committing sin, which overwhelms a person when he is separated from God, and to anchor one’s heart in His love, and to seek His help by losing oneself in Him. This *Istighfar* is characteristic of those who are so close to God that they consider even a momentary separation from Him worse than death. They continue to seek God’s forgiveness so that He may forever keep them immersed in His love. The other meaning of *Istighfar* is to free oneself from sin, to hasten towards God and to be captivated by His love—just as a tree is held firmly by the earth—so that, by growing in piety, the human heart may escape from the aridity and decay of sin. Both these states are called *Istighfar*...’ (Four Questions by a Christian and their Answers, pp. 22-23)

There are many stations to recognise God and the highest of these stations is Divine nearness. One should not be happy at just receiving true dreams or even revelation for even Bal’am was a recipient of revelation, yet he stumbled. This is why we should seek Divine nearness and this can be attained by connecting to those commissioned by God who are constant recipients of spiritual light from God.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote:

‘God is Light, as He states: ‘Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth...’ (24:36) A person who only sees the outward signs of this Light is like that person who sees smoke from a distance but does not see the light of the fire and remains deprived of the benefits of this Light as well as from its heat which burns the foulness of humanness. Those who accept the existence of God Almighty via recounted or logical arguments or supposed revelations like the apparent ulema (religions leaders) or philosophers or those who only accept existence of God Almighty borne of their spiritual powers, that is, their capacity to receive dreams and visions, but are deprived of the light of Divine nearness. They are like that person who sees from afar smoke emerging from fire but does not see the light of the fire and merely accepts the existence of fire by looking at the smoke.’ (Haqiqatul Wahi, Ruhani Khaza’in , Vol. 23 p. 14)

Writing about stations of Divine nearness the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said:

‘Because there are different stations of Divine nearness and connections with God, therefore when a person, who may be close to God, contends with a person who is far advanced than him in Divine nearness and love, it ultimately results in the person who is at the lower stage of Divine closeness not only ruined but also meeting his death in a state of faithlessness, just as it happened to Bal’am when he contended with Moses.’ (Chashma Ma’rifat, Ruhani Khaza’in, Vol 23, p. 349)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that the highest station of Divine nearness was that of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and now we see that in perfect obedience of the Holy Prophet, God has given this station to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). Anyone who looks for this station separated from the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) will have an ending like that of Bal’am.

Explaining how Divine nearness is attained through the Holy Qur’an the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote):

‘It is made evident by God to anyone who contends with a person who truly follows the Holy Qur’an through His awe-inspiring signs that He is with the person who follows His Word. Just as He made it evident to Lekh Ram and his death took place in such a way that he understood very well that through it God had put a seal on the truthfulness of Islam. Thus, through His living powers God draws a follower of the Holy Qur’an closer and closer and takes him to lofty heights of Divine nearness.’ (Chashma Ma’rifat, Ruhani Khaza’in, Vol 23, p. 309)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said:

‘It should be remembered very well that there is benefit in everything. We see in the world that there is nothing that is not beneficial for man from the highest grade of minerals to rodents and insects. Whether these things are earthly or heavenly, they are projections and signs of Divine attributes. And while the attributes are entirely beneficial, imagine the level of benefits in the Being. It should also be remembered at this juncture that when these things sometimes prove detrimental that happens because of our own mistake and lack of understanding and not because these things have inherent harm in them. Indeed, man suffers loss and harm because of his own error and slip-up. Similarly, we experience trials and tribulations due to our lack of knowledge of some Divine attributes or else Allah is All-Merciful and Compassionate. The reality behind the problems we face in this world and the grief we endure is borne of our own lack of insight and understanding. It is by virtue of this insight into Divine attributes that we find Allah the Exalted to be Ever Merciful, Noble and beyond imagination Beneficial Being. Only that person can have an understanding of this benefit who becomes close to Him and this station is attained by those who are called righteous and gain nearness to Allah the Exalted.

The Closer a righteous person becomes to Allah the Exalted the greater light of guidance he receives which illuminates his awareness and senses and the further a person goes away from God a ruinous darkness possesses

his heart and mind. So much so that he becomes a representation of: '*They are deaf, dumb and blind; so they will not return.*' (2: 19) and is ruined and destroyed. Meanwhile the person who is blessed with light finds great pleasure and honour. God Almighty has Himself stated: '*And thou, O soul at peace! Return to thy Lord well pleased with Him and He well pleased with thee.*' (89: 28-29). That is, O soul at peace and this peace is found in God!' (Malfuzat, Vo. 1, p. 69, new edition)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) also explained that some people are satisfied by obtaining something from the government while the source of satisfaction for others is their family, children and acquaintances. However, all this cannot give true satisfaction, in fact as they continue to seek satisfaction from these people their thirst/yearning increases and is never satiated and is ultimately ruinous. On the other hand God Almighty states that the person who finds satisfaction in Divine nearness does not care at all for all the riches he may have when compared to God Almighty. The world is not his objective and he finds true happiness which is in the Being of Allah the Exalted.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote:

'These verses teach us that our true happiness lies in nearness to God and love for Him. The moment we turn away from Him and lean towards the world, we begin the life of hell, and everyone is bound to realize this sooner or later, even if he does so when he is at death's door and is about to leave behind all his worldly possessions and relations.' (Lecture Lahore, p. 16)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said:

'Highest delight is found in God beyond which there is no greater delight. Something that is concealed is called paradise and Paradise is called Paradise because it has concealed blessings. True Paradise is God with Whom no wavering/problem is associated this is why the highest blessings of Paradise are counted as: '*...And the pleasure of Allah is the greatest of all...*' (9:72) Owing to his humanness man is ever in some grief or problem, however the more Divine nearness he attains the greater he is imbued in the colour of Allah and finds real peace and comfort by relative degree to his closeness with God. Most certainly he will partake of God's blessings in accordance and will be deemed exalted.' (Malfuzat, Vol. 1, p. 396, new edition)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) writes about the ending of those who attain Divine closeness:

'One who surrenders his being to God and devotes his life in His path and is eager to do good will get his reward from the fountain of Divine nearness. They shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. In other words, one who employs all his faculties in the way of God Almighty and whose word and deed, action and inaction, indeed his whole life is devoted to God, and who occupies himself in doing good, shall be rewarded by God Himself and shall be delivered from fear and grief.' (Four Questions by a Christian and their Answers, p. 20)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that prayer is a means of attaining Divine nearness:

'The example of prayer is like a sweet water spring to which a believer has access and he can satiate himself with it whenever he wants. Just as fish cannot live without water, similarly prayer is that water for a believer without which he cannot stay alive. The most appropriate form of such prayer is Salat in which a believer finds delight and bliss of that level compared to which the greatest delight of a hedonistic man that he may find in any decadence is nothing. A main accomplishment of prayer is Divine nearness. It is through prayer alone that man becomes close to God Almighty and draws God to himself.' (Malfuzat, Vol. 4, p. 45, new edition)

Explaining the standard of prayer and Salat, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said:

‘Man should have a yearning to attain nearness to God by virtue of which he will become worthy in God’s sight. If he does not have this yearning and only yearns for this world and all that is in it then he will be ruined after a brief respite. God Almighty gives respite because He is Forbearing; but if no one takes advantage of His forbearance what can God do! Man’s good fortune is definitely in having a connection with God. Human heart is the focal point of worship. If man worships God but his heart is not inclined to God, what good would that worship be! Therefore it is necessary that one’s heart is also completely inclined to God. You observe there are thousands of mosques but only ritualistic worship takes place in them! The state of the Jews in the time of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was exactly so. Their worship was merely ritualistic and out of habit and did not have sincere inclination of heart, which is the essence of worship of God. That is why God Almighty cursed them. Thus, even now if those who are not concerned about purity of heart go through hundreds of postures of Salat as a ritual or out of habit, it will be of no avail. The garden of practice flourishes with purity of heart and this is why God Almighty states: ‘Surely, he prospers who augments it, And he who corrupts it is ruined.’ (91:10-11) That is, only he will succeed who purifies his heart and who does not purify it will be ruined, that is who will make his heart a hub of selfish desires will be unsuccessful. We do not deny that there are thousands of impediments in the way to reach God. Had they not been there, there would have been no Hindu and no Christian on the face of the earth, everyone would have been a Muslim. However, these impediments are also removed by the grace of God Almighty. Only if He enables can man distinguish between good and bad. Therefore, the matter ultimately rests with this that man may turn to God so that God may grant man power and strength.’ (Malfuzat, Vol. 4, pp. 222-223, new edition)

Drawing attention to repentance to attain Divine nearness the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said:

‘Remember well that sin is a toxin which ruins man and not only is he ruined but is also deprived of attaining Divine nearness and does not remain worthy of receiving this blessing. The more he turns to sin the further he becomes from God Almighty and becomes distant from the light and luminosity that he once received from nearness to God Almighty. He is thrown in darkness and is embroiled in troubles and tribulations until such time that the most dangerous enemy, Satan takes possession of him and ruins him. However, Allah the Exalted has facilitated something to avoid this dangerous outcome and if man avails of it he is saved from the pit of destruction and can once again attain Divine nearness. What is that source? Turning to Allah or true repentance; God Almighty’s name is Tawwab (Oft-Returning *with compassion*) and He too turns to man. The fact is that when man sins he becomes distant from Allah the Exalted and God Almighty becomes remote from him. However, when man turns to God repentant of his sins, the mercy and compassion of the Ever-Merciful, Noble God is stirred and He pays attention and turns to His people, that is why His name is Tawwab. Thus, man should turn to his Lord so that He too turns to him with blessings.’ (Malfuzat, Vol. 4, pp. (141-142, new edition)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote:

‘Islam teaches that means of salvation which has been appointed by God Almighty from the very beginning. And that is to look for the station of God’s nearness with true belief and pure practices and by being absorbed in God’s pleasure. With effort made to attain His nearness and pleasure because all turmoil is in being distant from God Almighty and in His wrath. When man becomes close to God Almighty by virtue of sincere repentance, by adopting sincere means and attaining sincere obedience and sincerely accepting Unity of God, then his turmoil is removed.’ (Satt Bachan, Ruhani Khaza’in, Vol. 10, p. 275)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) writes about turning to good works to attain Divine nearness:

‘عمل صالح (good works) are a great blessing. God Almighty is pleased with عمل صالح and through them Divine nearness is attained. However just as the last sip of alcohol is most intoxicating, similarly the blessings of عمل صالح are latent in their lasting good. The person who perseveres and takes عمل صالح to their highest point is blessed but the person who abandons every عمل صالح half way through and does not take it to its requisite excellence remains deprived of these blessings.’ (Maktoobat e Ahmad)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said:

‘I know that a true believer is purified and he is imbued in the colour of angels. Just as his closeness to God Almighty is enhanced, he listens to the Word of God Almighty and is assured by it. Each one of you may reflect in your heart whether you have attained this station. I say truly that you are content on the outer shell alone whereas it is nothing and God Almighty is interested in the kernel. Just as it is my task to stop the external attacks on Islam, it is also [my task] to instil the true spirit and essence of Islam among Muslims.’ (Malfuzat, Vol. 4, p. 565, new edition)

‘Man’s respect is in it and it alone is the greatest wealth and blessing to have nearness of Allah the Exalted. When man is close to God, Allah the Exalted showers thousands of blessings on him, from the earth as well as the heavens. How much force did Quraish exert to uproot the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). They were an entire nation and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was all by himself, but look who was successful and who failed! Divine help and succour is a great sign of those who are close to God Almighty.’ (Malfuzat, Vol. 5, p. 106, new edition)

‘Be very wary of God’s curse, He is Holy and with honour. The wicked cannot attain God’s nearness and the arrogant cannot attain His nearness and the unjust cannot attain His nearness and the disloyal cannot attain His nearness. Anyone who does not have sense of honour for His name cannot attain His nearness. Those who fall on this world like dogs, ants or vultures and find comfort in worldly things cannot attain His nearness. Each impure eye is distant from Him and each impure heart is unaware of Him. One who burns for him will be given salvation from the Fire and one who weeps for Him will laugh. And one who breaks off with the world for Him will find Him. Become God’s friend with sincerity of heart, complete honesty and eagerness, He too will become your Friend. Be kind to your subordinates, your wives and your needy brothers so that kindness is shown to you in the heavens. Truly become His so that He too becomes yours.’ (Kashti Nuh, Ruhani Khaza’in Vol. 16, p.13)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) writes on how God shows His sense of honour for those close to Him and ruins the opponents:

‘When contempt and persecution reaches its height and the trial that God had willed comes to pass, is when God Almighty’s sense of honour for His friends is stirred, God looks at them and find them the victims and sees that they are persecuted and abused and are unjustly branded kafir and are hounded by the oppressors. He rises so that He can fulfil His way for them and demonstrate His mercy and help His pious people. Thus He puts it in their hearts to be fully attentive to God Almighty and humbly supplicate day and night to Him and thus His way continues as regards those who are close to Him. Ultimately wealth and help is given to them and God Almighty makes their enemies fodder for lions and cheetahs. Thus continues the way of Allah for the sincere, they are not wasted but are blessed. They are not slighted but are given eminence!’ (Hujjatullah, Ruhani Khaza’in Vol. 12, p. 198)

There is no doubt that we have observed exactly this to be God’s treatment with the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and God disgraced his opponents. This did not happen once or twice, but it happened many times over in different areas, in different countries where enemies of Ahmadiyyat were disgraced, humiliated and ruined. We continue to experience these spectacles. Huzoor said: ‘I would like to draw the attention of Ahmadi of Pakistan that God Almighty’s chastisement against the enemies of Ahmadiyyat will come to pass and will definitely come to pass. InshaAllah! We see its manifestations on smaller scale, but if these manifestations are to be seen quickly and on a larger scale, then every Ahmadi living in Pakistan and every Ahmadi with a connection with Pakistan needs to further develop nearness to God Almighty. Cast the world aside and move onwards and upwards in closeness to God Almighty. And we should make these efforts to move onwards and upwards so that we experience these manifestations soon. In general Ahmadi of the world also need to pay attention to this so that Satan’s kingdom is soon eliminated and the kingdom of those who are close to Allah the Exalted is established in the world. May Allah the Exalted enable us to make these prayers and may He include us in those people who are close to Allah the Exalted!