

Friday Sermon: Giving precedence to faith over worldly matters

17th October 2014

Every man, woman, young and old of the Jama'at knows a phrase very well, which is 'I shall give precedence to faith over worldly matters.' This is because the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) drew great attention to this. Speeches of our orators cite this phrase as well as addresses of Khulafa. Indeed, this phrase is a synopsis of the conditions of Bai'at as it is a summary of the pledges of our various auxiliary organisations. And these words are also mentioned in the conditions of Bai'at. In short this phrase is a promise an Ahmadi makes on which his Bai'at is dependent. As does his connection with Khilafat and Nizam e (administration of) Jama'at rely on this phrase. If he does not practice this phrase then his claim to Bai'at, connection with Khilafat and Nizam of Jama'at is erroneous. And assertions about Bai'at and attainment of God's pleasure are reduced to mere verbosity!

In this regard the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said: 'If someone asserts during Bai'at that he will give precedence to faith over worldly matters but does not practice it and does not honour his pledge, then what care has God for him?'

Everyone needs to have this phrase in view at all times. As it is clear from the phrase, no worldly matters should impede matters of faith and what is faith? It is spending one's life in accordance with and under the commandments of God and to try and gain His pleasure through each word and deed of ours. With the grace of God a large majority of people among us try and remove any impediments in the way of faith but it is a fact that everyone's efforts are not the same. People have varying capacities in terms of knowledge and other matters. However, God knows what our intentions are therefore He treats each individual in accordance with his capacity. The basis of fulfilling this pledge is good intention and no excuses should be made. Some people have limited capacities even in the worldly sense due to inadequate knowledge or other factors while others make greater and appropriate efforts and focus on attaining their goal and indeed attain it. Today's sermon was based on and in light of an exposition by Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) on this subject.

An everyday example of making inadequate effort as regards one's objective would be when before stepping out some people pay too much attention to and are acutely conscious of their appearance no matter how important the task in hand. They are

too picky not to have any creases in their clothes and fuss over this even if they do not have enough time to go where they need to be. Their effort to leave promptly is restricted due to their fuss over their clothes. Such examples can be found even today especially among Asian men and women who are too conscious about their clothes and appearance. There are others who like to follow fashion but with some other goal in sight they forgo their stylishness. If they have to run somewhere to achieve their goal they will do so notwithstanding their style and flair. If they have to sit somewhere, they will do so and will even walk in dusty surroundings if that is what it takes. This is because for them the main thing is their goal and for this they do not care about other things. Their elegant clothes or all-white attire does not become a hindrance in attainment of their goal.

Queen Elizabeth I acceded to throne in 1558 and reigned over England for forty five years. She was a famous queen and it was during her reign that England gained power and prominence. The Queen was known to like to have well-dressed and elegant courtiers around her and anyone who was not well-dressed was not allowed in her court. Indeed, she was surrounded by foppish and dapper young courtiers. Once she was going somewhere on foot with her courtiers when they reached a muddy spot. One of her young courtiers, Sir Walter Raleigh lay took off his valuable cloak and lay it down on the muddy spot. The Queen was astonished and asked why he did that. Sir Walter Raleigh replied that it was better to spoil his cloak than the Queen to get her feet dirty. From this time he was shown favour at court and was granted generous monopolies. Later, during the reign of King James I he was charged with treason and later executed although he had made many expeditions to North America during the reign of King James I.

The moral of this story is that in spite of been a dapper and stylish person Walter Raleigh forfeited his style for the Queen. If a worldly person can sacrifice his valuable cloak and give up his flair as he did we should think how much we need to do for the advancement and propagation of Islam and to strengthen and maintain it and to attain the pleasure of our Creator! Is our objective not even as dear to us as the Queen's pleasure was to Walter Raleigh? In spite of his service his ending was painful. But when one seeks God's pleasure one becomes the recipient of Divine blessings and also has an excellent ending. We should always remember that it is not enough to simply have high objectives but one also has to serve and makes sacrifices. God's pleasure can be attained when one truly gives precedence to faith over worldly matters.

God has not forbidden us to earn a living in the world and whatever is not forbidden is warrantable. It is indeed warrantable to wear elegant, valuable clothes, eat fine foods and live in splendid houses and have high grade ornaments. However, all this would be unwarrantable if it became a hindrance in the advancement of Islam. Shariah does not require you to look for an unattractive woman to marry. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said that while looking for a prospective wife one should not only look for worldly qualities but should also look how religious the woman is. Shariah says that a wife should not become a hindrance in the worship of the husband. If our young men and women and their parents are mindful of this, family problems would be resolved by giving precedence to faith over worldly matters and the other objective, which is the objective of a true believer, that is, to attain pleasure of God would also be achieved.

Similarly it is certainly not forbidden to wear fine clothes. However restraint is enjoined not to absorb oneself so much in fashion and trends that one loses sense of religious tasks. Owing to their fineness one's clothes should not become an impediment in service of faith. Rather than pay attention to Salat one should not be mindful about not letting one's clothes get creased. Islam teaches not to be negligent about religious work and in this way one can pay the dues of giving precedence to faith over worldly matters. Religion does not stop one from eating fine foods, what is unwarrantable is when fine dining becomes a hindrance in matters of faith. It should always be kept in view that whatever interferes in religious matters should be removed. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said in this regard:

‘Look, there are two types of people; firstly those who accept Islam and then become engrossed in worldly business and trade and Satan overcomes them. I do not mean here that trade is forbidden. Companions were also traders but they gave precedence to faith over worldly matters. When they accepted Islam, they attained true knowledge which filled their hearts with conviction about Islam. This is the reason why they did not falter in any field in face of Satan's attacks. Nothing stopped them from expressing the truth. Those who become slaves of the world are aficionados of the world and Satan overcomes and vanquishes such people. The other type of people are those who are concerned about the advancement of faith. This is the group which is referred to as HizbAllah (party of Allah). They triumph over Satan and his hosts.’

As stated earlier through the first quote of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) rights of Bai'at are fulfilled by giving precedence to faith over worldly

matters. To have an insight of this it is important to seek religious knowledge alongside worldly things and then the knowledge should be put in practice in one's life. Without gaining religious knowledge one cannot know what faith is which needs to be given precedence. Salat is a basic article of faith in Islam but about 80% of Muslims do not observe it and if they do offer the odd Salat in the day they offer it so hastily. Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) said that many prominent people are indolent about offering Salat and for aristocratic people offering congregational Salat is the same as eating flesh of swine is for ordinary Muslims. This situation persists today. Majority of the well-off become negligent about Salat and even if they offer it, their condition is contrary to how the condition of those who offer Salat should be. Those who offer Salat are guardians of human values and Salat bring pious changes in them.

It is said that the congregations in mosques of non-Ahmadis are increasing. Yet what revolutionary change has their Salat brought? The mullahs teach nothing other than hatred and this is the reason that in spite of increased congregations the fire of hatred continues to be flamed. Let alone their persecution against us, they are also perpetrating cruelty amongst themselves. They go to mosques with lowly worldly goals. Indeed for higher ideals one also needs to refine one's thoughts. If the increase in their congregations is not in view of high ideals, like propagating faith and serving humanity, then it is worthless.

All this should draw our own attention, more than ever, to understand the concept of giving precedence to faith over worldly matters. If we pay the dues of mankind along with paying the dues of God and propagate faith then we can enjoy blessings of this world as much as we want! We have to fulfil the responsibility of spreading the beautiful teaching of Islam which has been given to us. Translation of the Holy Qur'an in various languages of the world is our responsibility, we have to fulfil this. We have to build mosques everywhere so that we can facilitate true worshippers and for this planning needs to be done in every country. We have to establish the best ideals of human values and with all this even earning a living becomes an aspect of faith. Otherwise what is warrantable becomes unwarrantable for us in the sight of God.

If we push aside the thought of paying chanda when new iphone is launched or if some money has come in and we wish to buy a new car or buy a suit, what is otherwise warrantable becomes unwarrantable. If efforts are being made to have a mosque built but we give preference to other things, this is also wrong.

During the Battle of Uhad the rumour started that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was martyred. A Companion who had starved for days was eating dry dates as a meal at the time. When he heard the news he threw aside the dates and leapt into the battle field and was martyred. He abandoned all thoughts of starvation because faith was demanding that eating dates at that time was sinful. Something, no matter how good it is, when it interferes with faith, is not warrantable and something else, no matter how luxurious, if it does not interfere with faith, it becomes warrantable. We should try and instil that spirit which makes the condition of our heart seek the pleasure of God.

A Tradition relates that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was sitting in the mosque with his Companions when three men walked in. Two of them went straight towards the Prophet and the third turned away. One of the two who stayed saw space near the Prophet and quickly went and sat near him. The second person sat behind other people where he found space and the third person thinking there was no space for him, turned away and left. When the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) finished his discourse he explained that one of the three men sought refuge near God and God granted it to him. The second man was a little abashed and God too treated him with abashment. That is, his taking seat in the assembly caused his sins to be forgiven by God. The third person turned away and God also turned away from him.

On the face of it this is a very ordinary narrative. The third man had assumed that that the sound would not reach him so there was no point in staying there and he left. However, as the actions of the three men were based on what was in their hearts and they were expressions of the conditions of their hearts and God looks at what is in hearts and His reward is in accordance with what is in hearts. Therefore the condition of one's heart is very significant in terms of Divine rewards and this should always be remembered. God saw the condition of their hearts, who was more developed in matters of faith and who showed indolence. The first two were rewarded according to their actions and the third one remained deprived and caused Divine displeasure.

If a true believers makes sacrifice where needed he is worthy of Divine reward. Sacrifice is always either borne of one's capacity or borne of need. At times Shariah only asks for sacrifice borne of need. For example if a traveller comes to a group of people with a genuine need and asks for £100 and some people in the group fulfil his need as much as they can with but there is a shortfall of £10. Just then a well-off person comes by who could easily meet the entire need of the traveller on his own

but the need at the time is only for £10 and although he has the capacity to pay much more but if he pays the needed £10 with good intent he will be rewarded for it. This is making sacrifice in accordance with what the need is which the well-off person does and is rewarded by God. If there is an appeal for monetary contribution and people pay 100s and 1000s but a person of limited means can only give a few rupee or pounds which he does, God Who watches what is in hearts blesses this act of his and the man attains his objective. Just as the well-off man had attained his objective by paying what was required at time although it was a small amount according to his capacity, the man of limited means also attained his objective by giving in the way of God according to his means.

Hadith relates that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said that one dirham triumphed over a hundred thousand dirhams. This was because a man who only had two dirhams gave one dirham but the other whose wealth was in hundreds of thousands only gave a hundred thousand which was lesser according to his means.

It should always be remembered that the real objective is to attain pleasure of God. A true believer should mould the state of his heart for this purpose and his objective should be pleasure of God, therein is his success and prosperity and this is what giving precedence to faith over worldly matter entails.

We have been given the responsibility to do great tasks. We pledge to sacrifice our life, property time and honour. Indeed we should always ponder as to how we should utilise our capacities to give precedence to faith over worldly matters. Today Ijtema of Ansarullah [UK] also starts. They will also have their Shura. They should reflect over this, in their Shura as well and deliberate as to how much they should develop their standards of giving precedence to faith over worldly matters. In fact being Ansarullah they should be deliberating over attaining the standards because at their age Ansarullah should be role models.

God is not in need of anything of ours. It is indeed His grace and favour that He has told us that if we give precedence to faith over worldly matters we will attain His pleasure. Otherwise God is not in need of any money. All the resources, silver and gold in the world is created by Him. Had He so willed He could have Himself given wealth to people who serve faith, He could have Himself provided them. But He informed us of our objectives and drew our attention to making sacrifice in order to attain the objectives so that we may gain His pleasure.

Alongside wealth God has also bestowed us with children. He could have set in place other means of bringing up children. However, He told parents to bring up their children and spend on them according to their means to attain high ideals so that they children can grow up to serve faith. It is a great responsibility of Ahmadi parents to do the upbringing of their children in a way that they may serve faith. They should nurture their children in such a way that they have an insight into giving precedence to faith over worldly matters from childhood. By entrusting us with these matters God tests us and also confers on us.

Office-holders of all levels should appreciate that their responsibility to fulfil giving precedence to faith over worldly matters is more than others. They have been made responsible to attain this objective and for this there is a great need that they should enhance their level of sacrifice. Office-holder of every level, from neighbourhood to central, having had correct appreciation of their status can try and fulfil his pledge as indeed he should. God always blesses the sincerity of those who serve faith while feeling its pain and He confer His nearness to them. Office-holders should try their utmost to attain this station. May God enable office-holder of every level and every Ahmadi to have true insight of giving precedence to faith over worldly matters and to practice upon it!

Sad news of a recent martyrdom in Pakistan was given. Latif Alam Butt Sahib was martyred in Kamra, district Okara on 15 October close to his home. An unknown person called him in the street, as he turned around he was shot in the chest four/five times. Upon hearing the news his son Zeeshan came over and the emergency services also arrived but Latif Alam Sahib was martyred on his way to the hospital.

Ahmadiyyat came in Shaheed's family through his father Khurshid Alam Sahib who took Bai'at in 1934. Shaheed was born in April 1952 and worked as air force technician. He was retired in 1991 after which he started a business of legal books and was admired by all his customers including non-Ahmadi lawyers. At the time of martyrdom Shaheed was serving as nazim publication Ansarullah and ran a stationery shop. He had also served Jama'at in other capacities. His home was used as Salat centre for a long time. Shaheed was always eager to do Jama'at work and had a devoted connection with Khilafat. His was regular in offering Salat and used to arrive at mosque two hours prior to Friday Prayers.

Shaheed was a very courageous man and had fought off an assailant in 2007 when a man tried to shoot him but the bullet came stuck. He was 62 years old at the time of

martyrdom. His Wasiyyat was being processed at the time of his martyrdom and Hazrat Khalifatul Masih graciously approved of it and instructed the relevant office to carry out all proceedings in accordance.

Shaheed always participated in all Jama'at programmes, never missing any. He leaves behind his widow, one daughter Iram Waseem and four sons; Khurram Butt, Zeeshan Butt, Umer Butt and Ali Butt.

After retirement Shaheed consciously stayed in the area and made home there with the hope that Jama'at would be established there. May God bring Shaheed's good intention to fruition and may in return of his martyrdom God grants us hundreds of Ahmadis and Jama'at is established in the area. May God elevate the status of Shaheed and grant steadfastness to the bereaved family.

May God keep members of Jama'at safe in Pakistan in every way! The enemy is intensifying in enmity. May God soon bring about peace and tranquillity for us!