

# Friday Sermon: Faith, Salat and Steadfastness

November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) has always articulated the purpose of his advent in his books, writings and pronouncements. Those of us who claim to have taken Bai'at of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) need to always keep this purpose, in fact these purposes, in our view so that we can be among those who fulfil the dues of being members of his Jama'at.

Today Hazrat Khalifatul Masih presented a few of the aforementioned purposes. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that God appointed him in this age to revive faith and had sent him so that people may enhance their strength of belief. So that they have belief in the existence of God and belief that He listens to prayers, rewards virtues and also punishes evil. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) further said that unless faith is perfect man cannot fully do good deeds. The weaker the faith, more deficient will be one's good works. Prophets of God come to generate perfect belief and this was indeed a big purpose of the advent of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and the above is a summary of some of his pronouncements which Huzoor paraphrased. How can these weaknesses be removed and how belief can be perfected? Indeed, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) openly said that this cannot be attained by simply taking his Bai'at and spiritual endeavour was needed for this and this is also what God has stated: **'And as for those who strive in Our path — We will surely guide them in Our ways. And verily Allah is with those who do good.'** (29:70) Reformation cannot be attained merely by taking Bai'at and without making effort to change one's condition, to change one's heart and strive (Jihad) in this cause.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said: 'Everything progresses in the world on a gradual basis and spiritual progress also takes place in this manner. Nothing can be availed without making endeavour and this endeavour should be for God alone. One should not come up with useless spiritual exercises and endeavours, like hermits, of one's own accord. This is the task for which I have been appointed so that I may show the world how to reach Allah the Exalted.'

What was it that the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) showed us and what were his expectations? He set those models of worship of God and nobility in practise which was established by his master, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and then he advised us to follow those models. These were the models for which the Companions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) also endeavoured and attained God's pleasure and were such great recipients of God's grace that a world followed them!

Expounding as to what sort of people we should become the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said: 'I do not want that a few words are uttered in parrot-like fashion at the time of Bai'at. There is no point in this. Attain knowledge of purifying the self for this is what is needed. Our task and our objective is that you generate a pure change in yourself and become a completely new person. It is essential that for this each one of you understands this secret and brings about such a change that he can say I am a different person.'

If, while bringing about change in ourselves we do not make ourselves different from the rest of the world, then according to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) we will not be availing of our Bai'at.

He said: 'This humble one has merely been sent to take this message to mankind that from all the current-day religions, the true religion which is in accordance with the will of God Almighty is the one brought by the Holy Qur'an. And the doorway to the abode of salvation is 'There is none worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger'. Our real objective and purpose is to demonstrate the majesty of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and to establish his greatness. Our mention is simply in the

general sense; any praise of ours is with reference to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).’

And we have taken Bai’at to fulfil this purpose and in order to accomplish it we need the teaching of the Holy Qur’an so that having followed it we can spread it in the world because the salvation of the world is also in: ‘There is none worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger’. We need to tell the world that it will achieve salvation by coming under the banner of ‘There is none worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger’.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said about the purpose of his coming: ‘Allah the Exalted has willed at this time to make Islam triumph over all nations. He has sent me for this reason and has sent me in the way earlier commissioned ones came.’ Regarding his mission he said: ‘He has sent me so that I demonstrate Islam’s supremacy over other all nations and religions through illuminating arguments and proofs.’

Regarding the purpose of his coming, he also said: ‘I want to instil belief in God Almighty. One who believes in God Almighty is saved from the toxin of sin and a change comes about in his nature. He is given a new life after experiencing a sort of death and rather than feeling pleasure from sin, his heart is repulsed by it. One who attains this condition can say that he has recognised God. God knows full well that the state of affairs in this age is that there is no understanding/knowledge of God. There is no religion that could take man to this station and inculcate this disposition in him. We cannot express regret in this regard about any specific religion; this evil is becoming common and this epidemic is spread on a dangerous level. I say truly that by believing in God man becomes an angel, in fact angels prostrate to him and he becomes a being filled with spiritual light. In short when there is no understanding of God and there is widespread destruction and all manner of wickedness, when fear of God vanishes and the rights of God are given to man, in such a state of affairs God grants the light of His knowledge to a person and commissions him. The person is cursed and is persecuted and aggrieved in every way. Ultimately the one commissioned by God is successful and he spreads the light of truth in the world. Similarly, God commissioned me in this age and granted me the light of His knowledge.’

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) also said: ‘I have been commanded to discipline and teach moral strengths.’

He was once asked what would be the outcome of his claim. He said: ‘[It will] once again strengthen the weakened connection with God Almighty, which has caused love of the world to be dominant and has diminished purity, and strengthen the relationship between human devotion and Divinity. It will bring back long lost purity and love of world will become cold.’ He said this will come to pass through him.

Indeed it is a very big objective and a big claim. We see in today’s materialistic world how everyone is engulfed in materialism and has forgotten the Creator God. Those who outwardly acknowledge God do so only in an apparent manner. They neither have belief in God’s existence, nor do they have any perception or insight of it or of religion. For them the world and its pomp and positions are everything. It is indeed a big claim to be made in such a state of affairs but such was the belief in God the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) had and also confidence in his words.

However, all this also draws our attention that we read and heard this before coming into the Jama’at or our forefathers accepted Ahmadiyyat and we had the beneficence of their virtue, therefore these objectives demand of us that we make them part of our life. We too have to become helpers in accomplishing this mission. We heard the Crier and we believed, we should now declare: ‘...**We are the helpers of Allah...**’ (3:53) and assert that we will try to fulfil this objective. For this we have to self-reflect, ponder, plan and seek help from God for success. If we do not think about this after accepting the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) we will not be paying the dues of our Bai’at and this makes us culpable.

However, when we cast eyes on our resources and our condition it makes us think, is this possible? What are we to do! 80% of the world population is not interested in religion. People living in the developed world have wealth and material means which have turned them away from God. They say they do not have time to look for God. Only yesterday Hazrat Khalifatul Masih received a letter from an Ahmadi in Japan in which the writer had expressed his pain. He had asked his Japanese friend, who is extremely courteous and civil, to pray to God for guidance, the friend replied that he was very busy and did not have the time to seek guidance from the Ahmadi's God or to look for Him. This is the situation of what is deemed the developed world and which also tries to lead the underdeveloped world on its preferences. Thus, when a large section of humanity is not inclined to listen and when wealth and materialism attracts people and our resources are meagre, how can we contend with this evil? Outwardly it appears difficult but the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said he was sent for this and it will definitely come to pass, Insha'Allah. We are also declaring '**...We are the helpers of Allah...**' by virtue of this claim and Insha'Allah we will remain helpers of Allah. We will not lose hope due to the rejection of the world because we are not taking this mission onwards with a worldly perspective. On the contrary, God's help and succour assures us each step of the way.

When viewed from a worldly perspective and with mere reliance on our resources, talk of our success appears as the boast of a crazy person. When viewed in light of worldly powers, even that of one country the scenario can be worrisome. For example, take Russia or China, or any European country or any American country or any country in Oceania or any African country, we will find many impediments in every place which will frighten us from going forward. The situation of these countries or the worldly pomp and position was not in our favour a few decades ago and it is not in our favour today. However, these are God's works and they will come to pass, indeed, they are coming to pass. There was a time when due to the Communist rule no Tabligh could be carried out in Russia and its states. Now, parts of [former] Russian state have gained independence and have moved away from religious. Worldly razzle dazzle has blinded them, whereas in the Muslim states of the former Soviet Union muftis and religious leaders with vested interests have frightened the government so much that impediments are created for Ahmadiyyat, true Islam at every step. Ahmadi there are harassed and have restrictions imposed on them. The worldliness in the West is such that foul and indecent practices are given the protection of law. The indecency over which God destroyed a nation is now given protection in the West. In China, there is no interest in religion, it is now becoming a major economy of the world and is racing to get ahead in materialism. Japan is also a very developed country and amazing advancement can be seen in the technological field there. Majority of the country is embroiled in materialism and as the aforementioned example showed, God forbid, there is no time for God. This is the viewpoint of the majority of people. Japanese are very moral people but worldliness has removed them away from religion. Outwardly the Japanese say their traditional religion is Shintoism but in reality there seems to be a strange amalgamation of Shintoism, Christianity and Buddhism which is practiced. Different religions play different roles in the rites of passage. In the West the majority has forgotten God, in fact they make fun of God and religion is a burden, no one goes to the church. They say they are trying but churches are being sold.

Our resources do not have the significance of an iota compared to the worldly people. All these matters are cause for concern; indeed, they should be cause for concern in that how could we take our mission forward in such circumstances? However, God Who sent the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) for the entire world and Who sent his true and ardent devotee in this age with the message to turn to Him to find His path. How can this be done? It is stated: '**O ye who believe! seek help with patience and Prayer; surely, Allah is with the steadfast.**' (2:154) God's help removes the greatest of impediments; He is All-Powerful and has the power to make every impossible thing possible. He sent the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) as the source for salvation for the rest of time and till the Day of Judgement and perfected religious law by revealing the Holy Qur'an. He sent the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) in the current age to revive Islam. God states, there is no need to be concerned, when the situation is such and there are impediments and intellect does not work, then seek help with patience and Prayer. Seek help with sincerity and your task will be accomplished. It is God's promise that Islam will triumph but we are required to be patient and to Pray.

The Arabic word sabr (patience) has many meanings according to the lexicon. For example Sabr is to avoid evil with resolve and effort. It is a huge responsibility for a believer and an Ahmadi to keep his self in control in this worldly race and do Jihad of the self. Sabr also means to be steadfast on piety and not overlook this aspect out of any greed and always be firm on good works. Sabr is also submitting one's matters to God, to turn to Him in every difficulty and every trouble. If we do this, God's help will be with us, we will develop in spirituality. A true believer's one pound, one dollar and one rupee will so avail compared to tens of millions of worldly wealth that the world will be astonished.

Along with sabr, Salat (Prayer) is also needed. One meaning of Salat is of course Prayer. A true believer seeks help from God through Salat and great results of sabr are garnered when Salat is observed with due attention. Salat also means seeking God's mercy, to do Istaghfar (seeking God's forgiveness). To be drawn to praying and show compassion to mankind so that God's help is attained, to invoke salutations and blessings (Durud) on the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) to seek God's help. When one's sabr and Salat are this extensive then one will have God's succour and things will fall into place and doors of God's grace will open. This is what a true believer needs to do; to make efforts to make one's worship of God and morals the best possible. Whatever one can do, one must and then leave the matter with God. However, if the dues of sabr and Salat are not paid then one cannot be the recipient of God's blessings.

As mentioned earlier one meaning of sabr is to avoid evil. Repentance and Istaghfar are needed for this. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) once said that three aspects constitute real repentance. Firstly, to take all the thoughts and imaginations out of one's heart which are causing chaos in the heart, which incite one to badness and to instil repulsion against whatever bad thoughts there may be. Secondly, to express regret and mortification over badness and to express this so much in one's heart that one is embarrassed. Thirdly, to resolve firmly and staunchly not to do the badness again. If this is adopted and full efforts are made to attain high levels of sabr and Salat, then God's extraordinary succour will come one's way and we will also witness the promises God made to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace).

It cannot be that if we do not make any efforts to avoid badness, we do not make any efforts to follow virtues, we do not understand the spirit of the mission of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace), we do not turn to God in all our matters, we do not pay the dues of mankind, we do not pay attention to invoke salutations and blessings on the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) which brings the blessing of nearness to God, we do not observe our Salat, yet have the expectation that we are going to bring the world under the banner of Islam and fulfil the objective of the advent of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). InshaAllah, the world will definitely come under the banner of Islam, but if we do not pay the dues and do not try to do our best in sabr and Salat, we will not receive a measure of this success.

During Huzoor's recent trip a journalist in New Zealand asked him about the need to build a mosque there. He said the Jama'at was so small and already had a property! Huzoor answered him that we may be few now but in future we will Insha'Allah be many by virtue of the teaching of the Holy Qur'an and let alone one mosque, we will need many mosques. For this effort is needed everywhere in the world as well as mindfulness of one's condition. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih said that regretfully we do not have the attention that need to have as regards our Salat, our worship of God and instilling a connection with God. A few days ago a lady came for mulaqat and wept as she said that Huzoor says mosques should be built and mosques should be populated and dues of Salat should be paid but when Huzoor is not around, the attendance in the mosque decreases a lot. Huzoor said if this decrease is because of those people who live at distances but come to Fazl Mosque for Salat because of Huzoor's presence, it is a different matter. He said he hoped that those who travel distances to come Fazl Mosque would be going to their Salat Centres during Huzoor's absence. However, if the decrease in attendance is owing to those who live nearby, then it is a great cause for concern and attention should be drawn to it. Similarly someone wrote to Huzoor from Australia that since his tour there, the attendance in the mosque has decreased. Whether it is Australia or the UK or any other country in the world, it should be remembered that if we are to bring a revolutionary change, if we are to fulfil our responsibility to fulfil the mission of the Promised

Messiah (on whom be peace), then we need to populate mosques on a permanent and not temporary basis. [Heavenly] signs will be shown to us only if we pay the dues of sabr and Salat and if we completely and wholly devote ourselves in the cause of God, if we pay the dues of being firm on Unity of God – we will then experience ‘...**surely, Allah is with the steadfast...**’ and God Himself will come down to help us with all His powers and all the manifestations of His beauty. He will turn the hearts of the people of the materialistic world and will bless our works and will make the world recognise the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and come under his banner. Unity of God will be established and those who do not believe in His existence will turn to God’s worship. May God make it so that we pay our dues so that we may experience this!

Next Huzoor announced that he would later lead a funeral Prayer in absentia. Dr Bashir ud Din Usama Sahib passed away on 2 November at the age of 82 in USA. He had accepted Ahmadiyyat in 1955 and was among the early African-American Ahmadi. He was very regular in his Salat and was a loyal and sincere Ahmadi. He was an honourable man with great love for Khilafat. He was prayerful and passionate yet very humble and meek of nature. He had the honour to visit Rabwah and meet Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him) and Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III (may Allah have mercy on him). He met Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (may Allah have mercy on him) many times and had great love for him. Huzoor also had a special connection with him. He had performed Hajj with his wife and had served as the naib sadr of Cleveland for the past 20 years. He had great fervour for Khidmat e Khalq (social welfare) and in particular took great care of African-American brothers. In 1950 he wrote a booklet on the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). He was a dentist by profession. His wife Fatima Usama Sahiba had also served as sadr Lajna in Cleveland. He is survived by two sons who have a deep connection with the Jama’at. May God elevate the station of the deceased and always keep his family connected to the Jama’at.