

Corona challenges

Allah ﷺ said in Sura Taghabun:

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهُ وَاللَّهُ
يَعْلَمُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ
وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّتُمْ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ
الْمُبِينُ

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلِيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

Taghabun 64: 11. No calamity befalls, but with the Leave [Qadar] of Allah, and whosoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart [comforts him, makes him steadfast in Islam], and Allah is the All-Knower of everything. 12. Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ), but if you turn away, then the duty of Our Messenger is only to convey (the Message) clearly. 13. Allah! La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), and in Allah (Alone), therefore, let the believers put their trust.

Allah ﷺ reminded us that nothing happens without His Will and those who recognize that and worship Him (Muslims), Allah ﷺ will support by granting their hearts tranquility and peace. The way out of difficulty is to return to the obedience of Allah ﷺ and to obey Allah ﷺ and Rasoolullah ﷺ. But if anyone doesn't want to do that, Allah ﷺ warned him and said that the responsibility of Rasoolullah ﷺ is only to convey the message and not to convince anyone.

Finally, Allah ﷺ reminded us of our Creed, that it is only Allah ﷺ who is worthy of worship and that the Believers place their trust only in his hand.

We are living in very difficult times. We are facing challenges that are simultaneously physical, economic and emotional. The Covid-19 virus has unleashed a set of circumstances that have terrified the world. I wonder sometimes that all those organizations and countries who were talking very loudly about their Vision 2020; did they foresee what we are seeing today? What will the term 'Vision 2020', sound like after Corona?

Our culture as human beings is based on physical proximity and contact. Love, warmth, comfort are all factors of physical proximity, ranging from holding/shaking hands to hugging to kissing our loved ones. You sit close to someone you love. Our language is full of terms describing physical contact to convey emotions. 'Let's shake hands on that'. 'Seeing eye to eye'. 'Heart to heart talk'. 'Face to face meeting'. You 'lend your shoulder' for someone to cry on. The image that it invokes is something I am sure many of us remember as having done or having someone we love, do to us. There are many more, but it will suffice to make my point, that at one stroke, all these have become taboo. Today if I see a friend crying with grief because his father passed away due to Corona virus, how do I comfort him standing six feet away? People are being laid off and are not sure that they will be able to return to those jobs, because organizations are learning the economic benefits of people working from home and will cut overheads by eliminating

jobs. In the US alone, 10 million people have applied for unemployment benefit, 6 million in this week.

Ways of working will change when organizations realize that they don't need to keep people in buildings for work to go on. Franchising will hugely increase, and major organizations will bring down overheads. Amazon is doing it already with Prime delivery. They have outsourced most of it to entrepreneurs, thereby cutting overheads, risk and credit exposure. Individuals who have tasted the pleasure of working from home and how that has helped us to connect with our families, will explore options of continuing to do so. How we travel, work, eat, meet and greet and many other things, will all change, post-Corona. One of the important things to do at this time of enforced confinement, is to try to conceptualize scenarios in your life going forward and plan for them. We need to do that to mitigate loss as well as to prepare for new opportunities that will arise.

Islam gives us an advantage in that we understand the real power behind all this, the One who sent this reminder for us to stop fooling ourselves with our imaginary strength and knowledge and to wake up to the fact that we are in fact totally powerless and dependent on the One to Whom is our return. To Him we turn in our hour of need, broken in spirit, shorn of our arrogance, begging Him for His Mercy. At this time when we turn to Allah ﷺ, it is important to remind ourselves about the advice that Rasoolullah ﷺ gave us about how to behave when faced with such threats. Remember that

benefit and blessings lie only in the Sunnah of Rasoolullah ﷺ. It is our responsibility to ensure that not only do we take precautions for our own safety, but we ensure that we don't endanger others by our carelessness. We are responsible for ourselves and for our neighbors and fellow human beings. Remember that when you take precautions against Covid-19, you are not doing it because you are afraid of death or to escape it. Rather you are doing it because Rasoolullah ﷺ ordered us to do so and to seek the reward from Allah ﷺ. One of my worst nightmares is the thought that because an infected person is asymptomatic for up to two weeks and death typically occurs four weeks after infection, people who don't take precautions are likely to infect their own families and loved ones before anyone else. By the time they start showing symptoms, they have already infected everyone who came into contact with them. I don't know what is more painful when you are dying; the fact that you can't breathe or knowing that you are the cause of the coming suffering of your loved ones. Islam emphasizes this responsibility.

Abu Shurayh al-Kabi (RA) reported: Rasoolullah ﷺ, said three times, "By Allah ﷺ, he does not have faith!" It was said, "Who is it, O Messenger of Allah?" Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "He, whose neighbor is not safe from his harm." [Bukhari 5670]

Today when we are staying at home and not even going to the Masjid, it is because we recognize our responsibility to others as well as to ourselves. To go out and potentially endanger others and to bring infection back into the

home, is to go against the order of Rasoolullah ﷺ. Remember that when Rasoolullah ﷺ ordered the man to tie his camel, he didn't imply that Allah ﷺ couldn't look after the man's camel if He wished. He did it because to make arrangements is our duty. Then we have Tawakkul on Allah ﷺ because we know that our arrangements will work only if Allah ﷺ wills. It is like when we want to light up a room, we wire it up and put in the light bulbs and so on. Then we connect it all to the mains and know that the current comes from the transformer which is not in our home. But the room can't be illuminated unless we run the wires in the house and fix the light bulbs. We don't say that the room can be illuminated without the transformer, but we also don't say that the transformer can light the room if there is no light bulb. Ta'alAllahul Amthaal – Allah ﷺ created some rules for this world. The power comes from Allah ﷺ, but only if the rule is followed. Though Allah ﷺ can do whatever He wants without reference to the rules, He doesn't do it, because He is the one who made the rules.

Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas (RA): 'Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA) departed for Sham and when he reached Sargh, the commanders of the army, Abu 'Ubaidah bin Al-Jarrah (RA) and his companions met him and told him that an epidemic had broken out in Sham. 'Umar (RA) said, "Call for me the early emigrants." 'Umar (RA) consulted them and informed them that an epidemic had broken out in Sham. Those people differed in their opinions. Some of them said, "We have come out for a purpose and we do not think that it is proper to give it up"; while others said (to 'Umar (RA)),

"You have along with you other people and the Sahaba of Rasoolullah ﷺ so we do not advise that we take them into this epidemic." 'Umar (RA) said to them, "Leave me now." Then he said, "Call the Ansar for me." I called them and he consulted them, and they followed the way of the emigrants and differed as they did. He then said to them, leave me now," and added, "Call for me the old people of Quraish who emigrated in the year of the Conquest of Makkah." I called them and they gave a unanimous opinion saying, "We advise that you should return with the people and do not take them to that (place) of epidemic." So 'Umar (RA) made an announcement, "I will ride back to Madina in the morning, and you should do the same." Abu 'Ubaida bin Al-Jarrah (RA) said (to 'Umar (RA)), "Are you running away from what Allah ﷺ had ordained?" 'Umar (RA) said, "Would that someone else had said such a thing, O Abu 'Ubaida! Yes, we are running from what Allah ﷺ had ordained to what Allah ﷺ has ordained. Don't you agree that if you had camels that went down a valley having two places, one green and the other dry, you would graze them on the green one only if Allah ﷺ had ordained that, and you would graze them on the dry one only if Allah ﷺ had ordained that?" At that time 'Abdur-Rahman bin 'Auf (RA), who had been absent because of some job, came and said, "I have some knowledge about this. I have heard Rasoolullah ﷺ saying, 'If you hear about it (an outbreak of plague) in a land, do not go to it; but if plague breaks out in a country where you are staying, do not run away from it.' " 'Umar (RA) thanked Allah ﷺ and returned to Madina. [Bukhari Volume 7, Book 71, Number 625]

Today some people argue that we do our daily Adhkaar and pray Salah by Jama'a in the masjid. So how can anything harm us? This is an ignorant argument. Abu 'Ubaida bin Al-Jarrah (RA) and Mua'ad bin Jabal (RA) died in this plague. They were among the greatest of Sahaba and would have performed all the A'maal of Deen to a level of perfection. Yet they got infected and died. The Qadar of Allah ﷺ is not changed because you are doing your A'maal. The A'maal are for you and for benefit in the Aakhira and we do them because Rasoolullah ﷺ ordered us to do them. But for this world we must do whatever is necessary to ensure that we neither harm ourselves nor do we become the means for harm to come to others. Contagious diseases spread through proximity and contact irrespective of the reason for that proximity. So, all proximity must be avoided, no matter what its reason. That is the meaning of responsible behavior.

Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Amir (RA): 'Umar (RA) went to Sham and when he reached Sargh, he got the news that an epidemic (of plague) had broken out in Sham. 'Abdur-Rahman bin 'Auf (RA) told him that had Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "If you hear that it (plague) has broken out in a land, do not go to it; but if it breaks out in a land where you are present, do not go out escaping from it." [Bukhari Volume 7, Book 71, Number 626]

Narrated 'Aisha: (the wife of Rasoolullah ﷺ) that she asked Rasoolullah ﷺ about the plague, and Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "Plague was a punishment which Allah ﷺ sent on whom He wished, but Allah ﷺ made it a blessing for the believers. None (among the

believers) who remains patient in a land in which plague has broken out and considers that nothing will befall him except what Allah ﷺ has ordained for him, but that Allah ﷺ will grant him a reward similar to that of a martyr.” [Bukhari Volume 7, Book 71, Number 630]

Narrated Aisha (RA): Rasoolullah ﷺ said: If a person during an epidemic plague, stays patiently at home, hoping for Allah ﷺ’s reward and believing that nothing will afflict him except what Allah ﷺ has ordained (written) for him, he will get the reward of a martyr. [Musnad Ahmad 26139; Bukhari 3474]

Ibn Al-Hajar Al Asqalani (RA) said in Fath al-Bari: 10/94: “The words of the Hadith indicate that whoever fits that description will have the reward of a martyr, even if he didn't die.”

Please note that when Rasoolullah ﷺ ordered people to stay in their houses, he didn't say, “The one who stays patiently at home except for going to the masjid.” It is our belief that whatever instructions he gave, he did so perfectly, as that was his duty, to explain the Deen fully and completely and not leave out anything for people to guess or interpret on their own. So, if everyone stayed at home, the masajid would be empty anyway. Rasoolullah ﷺ understood this, yet he told people to stay at home and not to leave their homes or the place of residence i.e. city where the plague had broken out. Instead he gave them the Bashara (good news) that if they stayed at home and remained healthy, they would still get the reward of a martyr (shaheed). Some people ask if Rasoolullah ﷺ closed his masjid. He didn't

because there was no plague in Madina. However, he ordered Bilal bin Rabah (RA) and other Muezzins to call, "Sallu fee butootikum", in the Adhaan when it was raining heavily. Naturally people didn't come to the masjid and it was empty. Those who closed Masaajid in these times to protect people from infection, were following the Sunnah.

I remind myself and you to behave responsibly because if we don't, then we will be blamed and labeled as the carriers and transmitters of Covid-19 and will be responsible for giving Islam and Muslims a bad name. I strongly advise you to stay at home, make your homes places of goodness and virtue, use the time productively to do useful work, build good relationships, learn and teach Islam to your families, pray together and make sincere dua of repentance and ask Allah ﷺ for relief from this calamity.

This test came to remind us of the reality that this world belongs to Allah ﷺ and that it is only His command which runs. Everyone and everything else are null and void when faced with Allah ﷺ's command. Mankind is being forced to face itself and its actions and to sit in seclusion and introspect about what we have done with our lives, our neighbors, our societies and our world. We are being reminded that all that we used to feel powerful about has no power. All that we used to feel secure on account of, has no power to protect us. We are being forced to face the reality that all Anbiya came to remind us about, that it is only Allah ﷺ who can save us and to Him we need to return. La hawla wala quwwata illa billah.