

*Qhutbah, Insha Allah, Friday, October 17, 2003*

*Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lallah*

*Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim*

Faith, belief and action are all irrevocably intertwined. You cannot have one of the three without the other. There are many who have strong religious beliefs but little faith. What is faith? It is a trust in a belief when put into practice. People very eagerly cling onto a long list of beliefs but this remains just mere information if there is lack of certainty to put it into practice. What is belief? Belief is a set of propositions. It is not meant just for mere information; it constitutes the code of life that we submitters are required to apply.

Some take belief and faith to mean one and the same thing whereas others do see a similarity but define them differently to suit their own lifestyle. Hence, they search for God unsuccessfully because they lack conviction and reverence. The inevitable result is uncertainty, disappointment and frustration. If you do not act on your beliefs you cannot attain faith or God's blessings and mercy.

Most of us are fortunate that we are born into a "Muslim" family and as a result our beliefs are by and large in built. But when it comes to faith there is something lacking. If our faith were firm in God's omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence then our deeds and actions would have been in consonance with the limits proscribed by the Quran.

What should we do – go to the Quran which is straightforward, clear-cut and unequivocal. We all understand that Islam means a complete submission to God and His injunctions. It is a complete code of life consisting of belief and faith on one hand and performance and actions on the other. If we do not act on every principle and instruction of Submission it is perhaps comparable to disbelief.

Performance is the link between belief and faith. Without performance this belief loses its credibility. Many of us do not realize that without enactment our beliefs cannot save our souls, as they do not attain accomplishment. [9:105] Say, "Work righteousness; GOD will see your work, and so will His messenger and the believers. Ultimately, you will be returned to the Knower of all secrets and declarations, then He will inform you of everything you had done."

God Himself makes a distinction between submitters and believers. In this case, it would mean mere submitters who do not act or practice. In no uncertain terms does

God say a warning to people who believe that a mere declaration of faith is enough. You have to act on the belief that you accept.

[49:14] The Arabs said, "We are Mu'mens (believers)." Say, "You have not believed; what you should say is, 'We are Muslims (submitters),' until belief is established in your hearts." If you obey GOD and His messenger, He will not put any of your works to waste. GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful. [49:15] Mu'mens (believers) are those who believe in GOD and His messenger, then attain the status of having no doubt whatsoever, and strive with their money and their lives in the cause of GOD. These are the truthful ones.

Similarly speaking, the Quran talks a great deal about knowledge and its acquisition. But knowledge without its good use is useless. With education you acquire knowledge and attain some wisdom but it is futile and worthless if not accompanied with actions to match. When one enacts belief with good intention and piety our faith gets pure and sacred and this is what will help in bringing us closer to God.

One of the many dark sides to the human character is to profess things we do not ourselves practice. This is because of our instinct to present ourselves as role models of morality and respectability. It does not cost much to profess ourselves as the epitome of all virtue. However, this is a dangerous habit because it does not contribute any good to society and it propagates false pretense and deceit. [61:2] O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do? [61:3] Most abominable in the sight of GOD is that you say what you do not do. A true submitter must make his deeds and actions a true reproduction of his utterances. We should not profess what we do not practice. We should not project what we are not.

Even more dangerous is to advise and preach to others without practicing the same ourselves. Sometimes this may not have an effect because people may realize that you are not a follower of that code. However, these habits are counter-productive because people lose faith not only in the preacher but sometimes in the virtue of the good act as well. [2:44] Do you exhort the people to be righteous, while forgetting yourselves, though you read the scripture? Do you not understand?

There are some risky verses in the Quran on this. [3:188] Those who boast about their works, and wish to be praised for something they have not really done, should not think that they can evade the retribution. They have incurred a painful retribution. We have to follow every injunction of the Quran faithfully in letter and spirit; every word is sacrosanct.

Hence, it is absolutely vital that that we should not preach to others about virtue unless and until we ourselves do the same. Also, you will notice that we will, God willing, find people more receptive when they themselves are assured that we are “ in the forefront of the righteous ”. Any expectations beyond would be self-deception.

Our thinking should be set right too. If we think that our belief is right and this is sufficient to win over God’s mercy and blessings then we would commit the same error as the Children of Israel [7:163] Remind them of the community by the sea, who desecrated the Sabbath. When they observed the Sabbath, the fish came to them abundantly. And when they violated the Sabbath, the fish did not come. We thus afflicted them, as a consequence of their transgression. They did not pay heed to what was asked of them to perform and enact.

We have to remember and accept that belief and faith are essential fundamentals and the starting point of Submission but we also have to mould our life completely with the teachings and injunctions of the Quran. This has to be included with your belief and faith. Belief and faith without righteous actions and deeds would be akin to a body without a soul. God puts great emphasis on this. The Quran mentions about *those who believe* over 140 times but qualifies the statement also about *those who believe and lead a righteous life* over 90 times. From this we understand that the latter is as important as the former. Our faith otherwise would be incomplete; the two go in tandem as they are inseparable. One without the other cannot and will not exist.

Take the example of a person who is unwell and goes to see a doctor. He has full faith and trust in the doctor whom he has carefully chosen. The doctor gives him a prescription but instead of taking the medicine he puts the prescription in his drawer and looks at it very day very religiously. He hopes that he will get well soon. But will he? So mere trust and faith in the doctor cannot cure the patient unless he heeds the advice that the doctor has given.

If we feel content and satisfied by accepting beliefs but do not care to practice them then we should keep in mind the Quranic verse [29:2] Do the people think that they will be left to say, "We believe," without being put to the test?

Many people believe that the sword brought about the conquest of Islam. While this might be true in some cases there were also many who embraced Islam due to the strength of character and noble conduct of “ godly ” people that influenced society.

Belief and faith could rightly be considered the basic fundamentals like the foundation of a building. They form the first step in the doctrine of Submission. By God’s leave, they help guide us to the right path without which we would be lost in

the wilderness. Acceptance of beliefs and faith are not the end but the means to reach the end. Beliefs help you attain faith only if they are practiced upon. Only then can we aspire to be closer to God and do what is most pleasing to Him. [9:109] Is one who establishes his building on the basis of reverencing GOD and to gain His approval better, or one who establishes his building on the brink of a crumbling cliff, that falls down with him into the fire of Hell? GOD does not guide the transgressing people. [9:110] Such a building that they have established remains a source of doubt in their hearts, until their hearts are stilled. GOD is Omniscient, Most Wise.

Why is Islam called not just a religion but also *a way of life*? This is because the Quran, Masha Allah, offers us a total and all encompassing package for beliefs, deeds and actions all together. There is an action and deed called for at every step of the way. We have to follow the teachings with dedication and in all sincerity. We can only do this when belief is ingrained deeply in our heart. We cannot reduce what we feel like nor can we add anything to it because we ourselves will be the ones to suffer. We then go to the step of achieving total faith and nearness to God. We know that our deeds and actions will be weighed with the resultant reward and punishment in the Hereafter.

Understand the two broad categories – obligations to God and obligations to fellow humans. Salat, Zakat, Seyyam and Haj are all obligatory on us as these are God's commands. Undoubtedly, they will bring upon us God's blessings. However, they do not absolve us from performing our obligations on fellow human beings like parents, relatives, feeding the poor and the traveling alien etc. Fulfilling one does not absolve us from carrying out the other. By denying them their due share we are in fact usurping their rights and we could face God's wrath both in this life and most certainly in the Hereafter. No piecemeal performances are allowed and there is no part time submission [2:208] O you who believe, you shall embrace total submission; do not follow the steps of Satan, for he is your most ardent enemy. [26:89] Only those who come to GOD with their whole heart (will be saved).