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Friday Sermon

Title

The Best Way to Welcome Ramadan

The Virtuous Shaykh

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The Best Way To Welcome Ramadan⁽¹⁾

Verily, all praise is for Allah. We praise Him, and seek His aid and forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our souls, and from our bad deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, none can misguide, and whomsoever Allah leaves to go astray, none can guide. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, alone with no partners. And I testify that our Prophet Muhammad is His worshipper and messenger. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, as well as his family and companions in abundance.

Amma ba'd.^[2]

O Worshippers of Allah! Fear Allah as He deserves to be feared, and be conscious of Him in secret and in open.

Ayyuhal-Muslimoon:^[3]

The religion of Islam is a firm and solid religion, built upon pillars, supported by obligations, and adorned with recommended acts. The most beloved deeds to Allah are those He has made obligatory upon His worshippers. Allah (Exalted is He) says in the ḥadith qudsi: **“My worshipper does not draw near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him.”** (Narrated by al-Bukhari).

The greatest and most beloved of obligations to Allah are the five pillars of Islam. Among them is what never leaves a worshipper by day or night — namely, the two testimonies of

⁽¹⁾ This khutbah was delivered in Al-Masjid An-Nabawi on Friday the 25th of Sha'ban 1447AH.

⁽²⁾ Translator's note: "Amma ba'd" is a phrase used to separate between the introduction and the topic of the sermon. It can be translated as: "To proceed".

⁽³⁾ Translator's note: "Ayyuhal-Muslimoon" is an address meaning: "O Muslims".

faith. Among them are acts which are performed several times each day and night. Among them are acts performed once in a lifetime, and among them are acts that are renewed each year.

Fasting Ramadan is a pillar that is obligatory every year. When its time drew near, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) would say: **“Ramadan has come to you. It is a blessed month. Allah (the Mighty and Majestic) has made its fasting obligatory upon you. During it, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hellfire are closed, and the most-rebellious devils are chained. Within it, there is a night better than a thousand months; whoever is deprived of its goodness is truly deprived.”** (Narrated by an-Nasai).

Allah singled out fasting by attributing it to Himself and promised to give a reward for it. When Al-Karim (the Generous One) Himself is the One giving, do not ask about the magnitude of the reward. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: **“Allah (the Mighty and Majestic) said: ‘Every deed of the son of Adam is for him except fasting; it is for Me, and I shall reward for it’.”** (Agreed upon). Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “The scholars agreed that what is meant by fasting here is the fast that is free of sins in both words and actions.”

The month of Ramadan is a noble guest and a precious season. It is welcomed with glad tidings, joy, and happiness. Allah (Exalted is He) says:

﴿قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ﴾

{Say: “In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy — in that let them rejoice; it is better than all that they accumulate.”}
[Yunus: 58]

Among the best ways to welcome Ramadan is to show excellence before its arrival, for the beginning is an indication of

the quality of what follows. The month of Ramadan is a month of harvest. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) would prepare for it in advance during Sha'ban. 'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "I never saw the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) fast more in any month than he used to fast in Sha'ban." (Agreed upon).

It is a guest swift in departure:

(أَيَّاماً مَّعْدُودَاتٍ)

{A limited number of days.} [al-Baqarah: 184]

Those of high aspirations should seek the gracious gifts of Ar-Rahman (the Most Merciful) during the month of Ramadan. They should firmly resolve to perform the noblest acts of obedience by fulfilling the greatest of obligations: affirming the oneness of the Lord of all worlds. Through it, acts of worship become easy, and the worshipper experiences their sweetness. Allah (Exalted is He) said to Musa:

(إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي)

{Indeed, I am Allah; there is no true deity except Me. So worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance.} [Taha: 14]

The foundation of righteous deeds is sincerity of intention for Allah. Allah (Exalted is He) said to His Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him):

(قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصاً لَهُ الدِّينَ)

{Say: "I have been commanded to worship Allah, devoting the religion sincerely to Him."} [az-Zumar: 11]

Forgiveness of sins through fasting is conditional upon seeking reward from Allah. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's

peace and blessings be upon him) said: **“Whoever fasts Ramadan out of faith and seeking reward will have his past sins forgiven.”** (Agreed upon). Acceptance of the night prayer in Ramadan is likewise conditional upon seeking reward from Allah alone. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: **“Whoever stands in prayer [at night] during Ramadan out of faith and seeking reward will have his past sins forgiven.”** (Agreed upon).

When the intention is sound and strong, the reward is greatly multiplied. Allah (Exalted is He) says:

﴿مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾

{The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a grain that grows seven ears; in each ear are a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies for whom He wills.} [al-Baqarah: 261]

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “That is, according to the level of sincerity in his deeds.”

Ramadan is the best of months. It is a month of resolve and striving, patience and gratitude. During it, the Great Qur’an was revealed, on the noblest of its nights:

﴿لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ﴾

{The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.} [al-Qadr: 3]

Jibril used to review the Qur’an with the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) during Ramadan. When Ramadan entered, the early generations would leave gatherings of hadith and fiqh and devote themselves wholeheartedly to the Qur’an. Qatadah (may Allah have mercy on him) would complete

reading the whole Qur'an every three days in Ramadan, and when the final ten nights began, he would complete reading it every night. So increase your recitation of the Book of Allah, your Lord; by night and by day, for through it hearts find expansion.

The best prayer after the obligatory prayer is the night prayer, and the gathering of people for night prayer is among the special features of Ramadan. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: **"Whoever prays with the imam until he leaves will have the reward of a full night's prayer recorded for him."** (Narrated by at-Tirmidhi).

The worshippers are never without need for Allah, even for the blink of an eye. The fasting person is among those whose supplications are not rejected. Therefore, ask Allah for whatever you desire, for the One who responds is Generous. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: **"There is no Muslim on earth who supplicates to Allah with a supplication except that Allah grants it to him, or averts from him an equivalent harm, so long as he does not supplicate for sin or severing family ties."** A man said: "Then we will supplicate often." He said: **"Allah gives more."** (Narrated by at-Tirmidhi).

Ramadan is the month of generosity and mercy toward the weak. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was the most generous of people in goodness, and he was at his most generous in Ramadan when Jibril (peace be upon him) would meet him. "Indeed, the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him), was more generous with goodness than a strong wind when Jibril would meet him." (Agreed upon). The strong wind spreads benefit widely and its goodness does not cease. Charity will shade its giver on the Day of Resurrection, and Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with them

both) would not break his fast in Ramadan except with orphans and the poor.

The doors of repentance are open at all times, and no worshipper attains complete closeness to Allah except through it. Allah (Exalted is He) has commanded all believers to repent so that they may attain success:

(وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعاً أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ)

{And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, so that you may be successful.} [an-Nur: 31]

Allah named Himself “At-Tawwab” (The One Who guides His worshippers to repentance and accepts it from them), so that His worshippers may return to Him. Whoever turns to Him in repentance, Allah rejoices over him, gives him refuge, and changes his bad deeds into good ones. Indeed, the best day in a worshipper’s life is the day Allah accepts his repentance.

Seeking forgiveness brings blessings and repels afflictions. Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “When the worshipper knows that evil only reaches him because of his own sins, he seeks forgiveness and repents, so the cause of evil is removed from him. Thus the worshipper remains constantly grateful and seeking forgiveness, and goodness continues to multiply for him while evil is repelled from him.”

Remembrance of Allah in Ramadan is the adornment of the fasting person. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “The best people in every deed are those who remember Allah the most within it. Thus, the best of those who fast are those who remember Allah the most during their fasting.”

Purity of the heart from filth and sins elevates the fasting person. Allah (Exalted is He) says:

﴿يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ * إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ﴾

{The Day when neither wealth nor children will benefit, except one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.}
[ash-Shuara: 88–89]

Al-Fudhayl ibn ‘Iyadh (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “In our view, a person does not attain excellence through abundant fasting or prayer alone, but rather through generosity of their souls and the purity of their hearts.”

Fasting is abstention from food and drink, and restraining the limbs from sins — from backbiting that wipes away good deeds, or a forbidden glance that diminishes the fast. Let there be dignity and calmness upon you in Ramadan. Do not make the day you fast like other ordinary days.

Wa Ba'd^[4], Ayyuhal-Muslimoon:

Ramadan is an arena for competition, in which those who hasten to acts of obedience are the winners. The doors of goodness are flung wide open in it, and the successful one is he who diversifies acts of worship in Ramadan. During Ramadan, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) would combine various forms of worship that he would not combine at other times. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “Whoever diversifies the deeds that are pleasing and beloved to Allah in this world will have diversified delights in Paradise, in proportion to the abundance and diversity of his deeds in this worldly life.”

Beware of laziness and weakness, for Ramadan is only a few limited days that quickly pass. Glad tidings to the one who

[4] Translator's note: When coming at the end of a sermon, this phrase can be understood to mean: "To conclude".

reaches it. Glad tidings to the one who fasts and stands in prayer during its nights, and increases in obedience within it.

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

A'udhu billahi minash-shaytanir-rajim^[5]

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ).

{O you who have believed, fasting has been obligated upon you as it was obligated upon those before you, so that you may attain taqwa (righteousness).} [al-Baqarah: 183]

May Allah bless me and you...

^[5] Translator's note: This phrase means: "I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Shaytan".



The Second Sermon

All praise is to Allah for His excellence and kindness, and gratitude is due to Him for His guidance and favours. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allah alone having no partners, in glorification of His majesty. And I testify that Muhammad is His worshipper and messenger, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, as well as his family and companions in abundance.

Ayyuhal-Muslimoon:

The days and nights signal the shortening of one's lifespan and the nearness of his departure. The intelligent person is one who takes heed and acts. Remember those who fasted with you in the past, and yet today they lie confined in their graves with their deeds. They wish for a single day of Ramadan. Allah has granted you an extension of your life, so make use of it before it passes. How many people will welcome a new day without completing it, and how many hope for tomorrow but never reach it? If you truly understood the value of life and the way it passes, you would detest false hope and the delusion it brings.

Thereafter, know that Allah has commanded you to send blessings and peace upon His Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him)...

لَفَضِيلَةٍ بِسَخِّ

رَبِّكَ مُحَمَّدًا وَعَلَىٰ آلِهِ
إِمَامًا وَخَطِيبَ الْمَسْجِدِ النَّبِيِّ الشَّرِيفِ

بِاللُّغَةِ الْإِنْجَلِيزِيَّةِ



