

Islam, Faith and Perfection.

In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful.

All thanks be to Allah. We thank Him, we seek His help and His forgiveness. We repent to Him, and we ask Him to protect us from the evil within ourselves, and the evil of our acts. Those who are guided by Allah, nothing shall misguide them, and those who are misguided by Allah; nothing shall guide them. I bear witness that there is no God but Allah, the one; the only with no associates. And I bare witness that Mohammad is His slave and His messenger. Allah (may He be exalted) sent him with the guidance and the true religion. He delivered the message, and fulfilled what he was entrusted with. He counseled the nation, and strived in the way of Allah true striving. May Allah peace and prayers be upon him, upon his people, companions and all who follow them with kindness to the day of resurrection.

Dear brothers and sisters, we shall talk about a method adopted to know Allah's religion through a story reported by Omar Ebn-al-Khattab. He said: One day while we were sitting with the messenger (PPBU); a man suddenly appeared before us, wearing a very white dress and having very black hair without any signs of journey upon him, yet none of us knew him. He approached until he sat before the Prophet (PPBU) with his knees touching the Prophet's knees and he placed his hands on his thighs and said: O' Muhammad inform me about Islam. The messenger of Allah (PPBU) said: {Islam is to bear witness that there is no God except Allah, and that Mohammad is His messenger. Do the prayers, give the charity, fast Ramadan, and make pilgrimage to the Mosque if you are able to do so}. The man said: "You spoke the truth". We were astonished at his asking and confirming. Then he said: Tell me be about belief. The messenger (PPBU) said: {is to believe in Allah, and His angels, and His books, and

His messengers, and day after and to believe in fate good and bad}. The man said: "You spoke the truth". Then he said: Tell me be about Perfection. The messenger (PPBU) said: {is to worship Allah as if you see Him, for if you do not see Him, He surely sees you}. He said: Tell me about the hour. The messenger (PPBU) said: {The one who is being asked knows no more about it than the one who is asking}. He said: Tell me about it signs. The messenger (PPBU) said: {is when a slave girl will give birth to her mistress, and when you see the barefooted, naked, impoverished shepherders competing with each other in tall buildings}. Then the stranger left. The prophet (PPBU) remained seated for quite a while; then he asked me: {Omar, do you know who the questioner was?} I said: "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said: {that was Gabriel [revelation Angel], he came to teach you your religion}.

This report about the messenger contained the three facts of religion: Islam, belief (or faith) and perfection. These are three great layers because Allah (May He be exalted) makes happiness or misery in this life and the next depend upon them. And those three layers are strongly related. For the circle of Islam has the wider scope. This is followed by the circle of belief and finally the circle of perfection. Consequently, each perfectionist is a believer; and each believer is a Muslim. This explains the secret in God's argument with those groups of bedouins who claimed to be believers. Allah says: {The bedouins said: "We have become believers." Say: "You believe not but you only say, 'We have surrendered (or we have become Muslims),' for Faith has not yet entered your hearts"} 49-14. This shows that belief or faith is a more specific or a narrower circle than Islam.

If we wanted to delve deeper in understanding the above three mentioned levels then we find that Islam: is worshiping Allah as per his rules and laws, and submitting to him with obedience to Him in

public and in privacy. And that is the religion that Allah has favored his messenger (PPBU) with; and bestowed upon him and upon his nation. And He made it the religion for the entire man kind until the day of resurrection; and no other religion shall be accepted from anyone. Islam has six main conditions as mentioned in the hadeeth above; the first of which is bearing witness that there is no god but Allah and that Mohammad is His messenger. And both become common in a gentle reference that worship is not complete except when two conditions are fulfilled: the sincerity to Allah (May He be Exalted), and following the example of the messenger (PPBU).

It is worth noticing that the above hadeeth explained Islam from by the public acts. That is because when Islam and belief are used together then Islam is explained as the public acts and belief (or faith) is explained by the private acts and convictions, and acts of the heart.

Belief or faith consists of three matters: admission within the heart, expressing or declaring that verbally by the tongue, and physically doing acts with the organs and within the rules. Admission within the heart means believing within the heart all the wise laws that came from Allah and His messenger (PPBU). Submitting and accepting them. Allah praises the believers when He says: {The believers are those who believed in Allah and His messenger then never had doubts} 41-15. Contrasting that comes hypocrisy. For hypocrites are those who appear to be Muslims on the exterior in public; doing all the religious rituals with the Muslims. But, they internally and privately they do not believe and they even hate the religion.

Expressing or declaring belief verbally by the tongue is to declare the two testimonies. It is not enough just to believe that there is a God and to admit that Muhammad (PPBU) is being a prophet without

actually verbally declaring those two testimonies. The disbelievers at the time of the messenger (PPBU) admitted that Allah is the creator. But they refused to say and admit the word of singularity.

Allah says: {Say: who provides for you from the sky and the earth? Or who owns hearing and sight? And who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? And who organises the affairs?" They will say: Allah} 10-31

Allah also says: {When it was said to them: There is no other God but Allah; they puffed themselves up with pride) 37-35.

In fact the messenger's own uncle Abu-Talib used to admit that his nephew is a prophet, depended and supported him. But that was of no value to him and did not enough to save him from Hell fire; because he did not accept to say the declaration of faith and the key to paradise. The scholars agree that this who does not verbally make the declaration of faith (if able) then he or she can not be considered to have entered into Islam.

Acting according to this belief or faith is one of the great issues that many people have failed to comprehend. Faith can only be realised by physical acts. Islamic law is full of undeniable references and statements about the absolute importance and requirements of acts to take place as a condition in order for faith to be right. Giving up living by the religion of Allah is one of the greater ways of draw back from obedience to Allah and His messenger (PPBU).

This shows just how misguided are those who move away from the light of Allah and stop acting by His laws. When one of them is given an advice to do a prayer or give charity; then they use the excuse that faith is within the heart. They forget that actions are needed to verify that or deny it. The scholar Hasan Al-Basri said: if his faith is true, then it would inherit acts, and acts would be fruitful.

Faith can increase or decrease. Admission within the heart differs from one person to another; and from one situation to another. No doubt that the certainty of the companions into their God is much greater than that of others. One may experience moments of strong faith to the point that one could almost see paradise and Hell. And occasionally one can experience moments of weakening or coolness in faith. Handal (حنظلة) one of the companions said that when we sit with the messenger (PPBU) and he reminds us of Hell and paradise we could almost see it with our own eyes. And when we leave him and get involved with our wives and children and homes we forget a lot. Therefore, the heart conviction varies; and similarly, verbal and physical acts. This who thinks and remembers Allah a lot is not like other, and this who actively worship and continually expresses obedience is not like one who over indulges into sin and disobedience.

Factors that would increase the level of faith are numerous. Some of those are: knowing Allah's names and attributes. When one knows that Allah can always see him, then one tends not to do an act of disobedience; and because of the sense of constantly being watched by Allah. Allah says: {and say: God, the owner of all possessions, you give possession or ownership to whom you please, and extract possession from whom you please, and you glorify or honor whom you please and humiliate or disgrace whom you please, it is within your hand all goodness. You are capable to doing anything}. When one reads that his/her heart rests and relaxes and one accepts Allah's decisions and Allah's destiny or fate. Frequently remembering Allah refreshes the heart and like nutrition to the soul.

Other factors that increase faith is looking and studying Allah's creations, miracles and signs in the universe. Actively doing acts of worship, and seeking acts of good deeds.

The hadeeth we are looking at today also talked about the level of perfection. It is one of the highest and most honored levels. Allah has guaranteed those who belong to this level with kindness and victory. Allah say: {Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are perfectionists}16-128. Perfection here was explained by the messenger (PPBU) as: {to worship Allah as you see Him. And if you do not see Him, He sees you}. This level indicates that person's sincerity; and continuous watching out for Allah (May He be praised).

Gabriel (PBU) then asked about the day of resurrection and its signs. The messenger showed that its knowledge is kept exclusively for Allah. But, he outlined some of its signs. He said (a slave girl will give birth to her mistress); meaning the daughter of a slave becomes a lady who herself owns other slaves. This is an indication of slavery becoming common towards the end of life. This has happened not in the so distance past. The second sign {seeing the barefooted, naked, impoverished shepherders competing with each other in tall buildings}. It indicates that real poor impoverished people that normally had no pride in the past and do not deserve riches and pride. Allah gives them riches so they start competing in building extravagant homes and palaces.

We ask Allah to give us knowledge which will be of benefit, and a good accepted deed. And all thanks be to Allah.