



Synopsis of Friday Sermon

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

From Ramaḍān to a Life of Response - *Takbīr*, *Shukr*, and *Jihād*

Ramaḍān has departed, but its purpose remains. It was never meant to be an end; rather, it is a training ground for the rest of our lives. During this blessed month, we fasted, stood in prayer, gave in charity, called upon Allah (SWT), sought His forgiveness, and reconnected with our families. None of these acts were ends in themselves. They were part of a transformative process, one designed to reorient the heart so that Allah (SWT) becomes supreme in our lives. These are not isolated acts of worship, but a comprehensive program of spiritual renewal.

Allah concludes the passage of fasting in Sūrah al-Baqarah with a powerful purpose:

وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَانَكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ١٨٥

“So that you may magnify Allah for what He has guided you to, and so that you may be grateful.” [al-Baqarah, 2:185]

This āyah reveals that everything in Ramaḍān is meant to lead to two enduring outcomes: *takbir* (magnifying Allah), and *shukr* (gratitude). When we say *Allāhu Akbar*, it is not merely a theoretical statement that “Allah is the Greatest;” it is a declaration that He is greater than our desires and greater than our distractions. To magnify Allah (SWT) is to make Him greater in our decisions, not just on our tongues.

Ramaḍān trains the heart to live this reality. If we are able to leave what is ḥalāl (food and drink) for the sake of Allah, then we are certainly capable of leaving what is ḥarām for His sake. The central lesson of Ramaḍān is that Allah (SWT) must be greater than everything in our lives. This recognition is itself a blessing. Our ability to recognize His greatness and submit to Him is a gift that demands gratitude.

Allah (SWT) connects *takbīr* with *shukr* because true gratitude is not limited to speech, it is expressed through obedience. Ramaḍān opens our eyes to blessings we often overlook: the blessing of food when we break our fast, the blessing of time when we stand in prayer, the blessing of guidance through the Qur’an, and the blessing of forgiveness when we turn back to Allah. Yet gratitude is not merely saying *al-ḥamdu lillāh*. It is using our health in obedience, our wealth in charity, our time in remembrance, and our lives in submission. As the scholars say, ‘gratitude is to use every blessing in the way that pleases the One who gave it.’

When Allah (SWT) commands us to be grateful, He is not asking for words alone. *Shukr* is not simply an utterance; it is a way of life, a life in which Allah is made supreme in our hearts, our choices, and our actions. It is the lived reality of *Allāhu Akbar*, and the highest expression of gratitude. But how do we carry this *takbīr* beyond Ramaḍān? Allah answers this in the very next āyah:

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۗ ١٨٦

“And when My servants ask you concerning Me, indeed I am near. I respond to the call of the caller when he calls upon Me.” [al-Baqarah, 2:186]

This is a profound promise, Allah is not distant; He is near. He listens and He responds. Yet the āyah does not end there, it continues:

“So let them respond to Me and believe in Me so that they may be guided.”

Allah is near, but His nearness calls for a response. Just as we call upon Allah, He calls upon us. We make du‘ā’ and He responds; He commands, and we must respond. This is the essence of the dīn: a life of response to Allah (SWT). Responding to Him is not mere words, it is fulfilling our God-ordained duties and aligning our lives with His commands.

Allah (SWT) outlines what this response looks like in Sūrah al-Ḥajj:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

“O you who believe! Bow, prostrate, worship (and obey) your Lord, and do good so that you may succeed.” [al-Ḥajj, 22:77]

These are not isolated commands, but a complete program for the believer’s life. To bow and prostrate is to establish worship, not merely as physical movement, but as a disciplined commitment to ṣalāh, fasting, zakāh, and all acts of worship. These form the structure of our relationship with Allah (SWT) and the pillars that uphold our dīn. Ramaḍān trained us in this discipline, and now the question remains whether we will continue. The command to “worship (and obey) your Lord - وَأَعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ” takes us beyond rituals into the deeper reality of ‘ubūdiyyah, a state of complete servitude to Allah (SWT). It is not limited to acts of worship, but encompasses a way of life. It means submitting our will to Allah’s will, obeying Him in our personal lives, family relationships, business dealings, and social conduct. It requires internalizing humility, dependence, love, and reverent fear of Allah (SWT). In this state, everything becomes an act of worship, our work, our speech, and our relationships, so long as they align with His command. ‘Ubūdiyyah is to live every moment as a servant of Allah, rather a humble obedient, loving slave of Allah, embodying sincerity, trust, and submission. It is the most direct expression of *Allāhu Akbar*: that we obey Allah even when it is difficult.

The next command, “do good, وَأَفْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ” expands our responsibility beyond ourselves to humanity. Doing good is not limited to charity or kindness, though they are part of it. The Qur’anic understanding of goodness الْخَيْر is far broader, it is to convey and uphold the dīn. The highest good is to guide humanity to what will save them in this life and the next. This includes calling others to Allah with wisdom, enjoining good and forbidding wrong, standing for justice, and helping others find their way to Allah (SWT). What greater good can there be than saving a soul from eternal loss? This aligns with the prophetic mission, not only easing worldly hardship, but securing the *ākhirah*. If Allah is truly *Akbar*, then His guidance cannot remain private; it must shape the world around us.

After all of this comes the culmination:

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ

“And strive for Allah as He deserves to be striven for.” [al-Ḥajj, 22:78]

This striving (jihad) is the continuation of responding to Allah (SWT). It is to exert one’s utmost effort to live, uphold, and spread the truth. It is not separate from our duties, but the comprehensive effort to fulfill them at every level. Jihād is a multi-dimensional reality, beginning with jihād al-nafs, the struggle against the self. This foundational struggle involves resisting desires, controlling anger, and overcoming arrogance and heedlessness. Without it, all other efforts collapse, and even good causes can become corrupted. It includes striving with the heart, the tongue, the intellect, and through action and sacrifice.

Jihād also includes resisting shayṭān (Iblis), his whispers, his deceptions, and his false promises, standing firm against falsehood in society, and striving with the Qur’an as a source of truth and guidance. As Allah says:

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهِ جِهَادًا كَبِيرًا ٥٢

“Strive against them with it (the Qur’an) a great striving.” [al-Furqān, 25:52]

It is a striving for truth, for the dignity of humanity, and for justice, so that people may live by it and establish it in their lives. This striving is carried out with patience, wisdom, and steadfastness, reflecting a lifelong

commitment to responding to Allah in every aspect of life.

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ ۗ هُوَ أَرْجَبُكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ۗ مَلَأَ آبَائِكُمْ إِِبْرَاهِيمَ ۗ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ۗ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ ۗ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ ۗ ٧٨

“And strive for Allah as He deserves to be striven for. He has selected you and has not placed upon you in the religion any hardship, the way of your father Ibrāhīm. He named you Muslims before and in this (revelation), so that the Messenger may be a witness over you and that you may be witnesses over humanity. So establish ṣalāh, give zakāh, and hold firmly to Allah. He is your Protector, what an excellent Protector and what an excellent Helper.” [al-Ḥajj, 22:78]

This is one of the most powerful and mission-defining āyāh in the Qur’an. It is not merely descriptive; it is a declaration of identity and responsibility. Allah informs this ummah that it has been selected, not as an honorary distinction, but as a divine appointment tied to duty. This selection is purposeful. Just as the Prophet (ﷺ) was chosen to uphold tawḥīd, call humanity to Allah, and establish His dīn, this ummah inherits that very mission. To be selected, therefore, is to be tasked.

Allah (SWT) then reminds us that He has placed no hardship in the religion. This does not mean that the dīn requires no effort, but rather that its path is clear, its guidance accessible, and its law balanced and humane. The mission entrusted to this ummah is great, immense, and weighty, but the dīn itself equips us to fulfill it. There is ease in its legislation, yet weight in its responsibility, and that responsibility carries accountability. The āyāh further establishes the first level of accountability:

لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ

“so that the Messenger may be a witness over you.”

The Prophet (ﷺ) conveyed the message completely, lived it perfectly, and demonstrated it practically. On the Day of Judgment, he will testify that the message reached us, leaving us with no claim to ignorance. This naturally leads to the next responsibility:

وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

“and that you may be witnesses over humanity.”

The ummah is not meant to be isolated, passive, or self-contained. It is meant to be a witnessing community, bearing testimony to the truth before all people.

This witnessing is not limited to verbal testimony; it is comprehensive. It includes conveying the message of Islam clearly, explaining tawḥīd, prophethood, and the Qur’an, and removing misunderstandings, because one cannot testify to something that was never conveyed. It also includes embodying Islam through integrity, justice, and mercy, so that people see its truth in lived form, not just in words. Ultimately, this testimony will stand on the Day of Judgment either for or against humanity: for those who received and accepted the truth, and against those who rejected it after clarity. However, this testimony is only valid if the message was truly conveyed and the example genuinely lived. The most complete testimony emerges when humanity witnesses the justice of Islam as a fully embodied way of life.

The placement of this āyāh is also significant. It comes after commands of worship, ‘ubūdiyyah, doing good, and jihad, because all of these serve as preparation for this ultimate role of bearing witness over humanity. They are not ends in themselves; they are the means by which the ummah is shaped to fulfill its mission. The implication is profound. If the ummah fails to convey the message, fails to embody it, or fails to stand for truth, then it fails its core purpose, and its testimony becomes weakened. Allah did not select this ummah merely for its own salvation, but to carry the message of salvation to all humanity. We are not simply believers, we are witnesses: witnesses to the truth of this dīn through our words, and witnesses through the lives we live.

Allah (SWT) has selected us not to be passive, but to be witnesses, witnesses that this message is true, that this Qur'an is guidance, and that Islam is the path to salvation. If we remain silent, then who will speak? If we do not carry this message, then who will carry it? We are the ummah of Muḥammad (ﷺ), entrusted with the greatest responsibility: to stand before humanity and bear witness to the truth. May Allah enable us all to live up to this task. Āmīn.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۗ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ١٨٦

“And when My servants ask you concerning Me, indeed I am near. I respond to the call of the caller when he calls upon Me, so let them respond to Me **and believe in Me** so that they may be guided.” [al-Baqarah, 2:186]

This āyah teaches us that īmān here is not merely entry into faith through verbal attestation, but its deepening, perfection, and activation. The one being addressed already says *lā ilāha illa Allāh*, so “believe in Me” must mean to believe in a way that transforms how one lives, responds, and relates to Allah (SWT). It is īmān in its complete sense, not its minimal form.

In this context, where Allah declares His nearness and His response to the caller, belief takes on the meaning of living certainty. It is to believe in His nearness not as an abstract concept, but as a lived reality, to feel that Allah is close, to turn to Him constantly, and to remain spiritually connected even in moments of physical solitude. It is to believe in His response, making du‘ā’ with certainty rather than doubt, trusting His timing, His wisdom, and His answer, and not abandoning du‘ā’ when results seem delayed. This is why the āyah begins with du‘ā’ and ends with īmān, because weak īmān leads to weak du‘ā’. It is also to believe in His guidance, trusting that His commands are best, following His guidance even when it conflicts with personal desires, and submitting with conviction rather than reluctance. Guidance, therefore, is the fruit of a higher level of īmān.

The āyah also highlights the relationship between response and faith. “Let them respond to Me” points to outward action, while “and believe in Me” refers to the inner state, and “so that they may be guided” is the result. This shows that response without īmān becomes hollow ritual, while īmān without response becomes an empty claim. True guidance emerges when outward obedience and inward conviction come together. Allah (SWT) mentions īmān again to remind us that faith is not static, it rises and falls, strengthens and weakens. We are not to be content with merely saying “we believe.” Rather, we are called to renew our īmān, elevate it, and live it. When Allah says, “believe in Me,” He is not calling us to enter Islam, we are already within it. He is calling us to deepen our faith until it becomes certainty, until it shapes our responses, and until it governs our lives. True īmān is not just a mere statement, but a reality that is lived, believing in His nearness until we constantly turn to Him, believing in His response until we call upon Him with certainty, and believing in His guidance until we submit to Him completely.

Ramaḍān taught us to call upon Allah, but also calls us to respond. Thus, our dīn becomes a complete way of life: *takbir*, recognizing that Allah is greater than everything; *shukr*, living in gratitude through obedience; *istijābah*, answering Allah’s call; *jihad*, striving to uphold that response in every aspect of life; and *shahādah ‘alā al-nās*, conveying this truth to humanity.

If Allah is truly near, then He sees how we live after Ramaḍān. If He truly responds to us, then we must respond to Him. If we truly say *Allāhu Akbar*, then nothing should take precedence over His command. Let us be among those who respond to Allah, not only in Ramaḍān, but for the rest of our lives. Let us be among those who bow and prostrate, who live as His servants, who do good, and who strive in His path as He deserves. And let us be among those who, when Allah calls them, they answer.

O Allah, make us among those who listen to the Word and follow the best of it. Make us among Your servants who respond to You, who strive in Your path, and who are sincere in their obedience to You. Āmīn.

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