



Synopsis of Friday Sermon

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IONA
REPENTANCE
REVITALIZATION OF FAITH
RENEWAL OF COVENANT

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Purifying the Soul: The Qur'anic Path to True Success

Allah (SWT) says: “*By the soul and the One who fashioned it, and inspired it with its wickedness and its righteousness. Indeed, successful is the one who purifies it, and disappointed is the one who corrupts it.*” [al-Shams, 91:7–10]

In Sūrah al-Shams, Allah swears by some of His greatest creations—the sun, the moon, the day, the night, the heavens, and the earth—before concluding with a powerful truth about the human soul. These divine oaths are meant to capture our attention and emphasize what truly matters: the state of our souls.

Incidentally, as believers, we are only permitted to swear by Allah (SWT), and even then, only when necessary. Allah, however, may swear by anything He has created because everything belongs to Him. All of creation reflects His power, wisdom, and majesty. When Allah swears by the soul itself, it is a clear indication of how central the human soul is to our purpose in life.

What Is True Success?

The Qur'an defines success (*falāh*) very differently from how the world defines it. Success is not measured by wealth, status, or achievements. True success, according to Allah, lies in purifying the soul, while failure lies in corrupting it.

A person may gain the entire world and still lose their soul. Another may live simply yet attain everlasting success. The difference is not what they possessed, but how they nurtured their inner self.

Understanding the Soul

Allah tells us that He fashioned the soul and inspired it with both right and wrong [al-Shams, 91:8]. Every human being is born with an inner moral compass. We do not need revelation to know that injustice, murder, or theft are wrong—this knowledge is already placed within us.

The soul also recognizes its Creator. It knows where it came from and longs for Allah, even if that longing becomes buried under distractions and desires.

The Prophet (ﷺ) taught us that the spirit (*rūh*) is breathed into the body while the child is in the womb. Before that moment, the body is living flesh; after it, the human being becomes a moral and spiritual soul accountable before Allah. This soul now requires care, nourishment, and protection.

The Soul as a Seed

Imagine planting a seed in the ground. You hope it will grow into a strong tree and eventually bear fruit. But that will only happen if you water it, protect it, and remove the weeds around it. If weeds are left unchecked, they will consume the nutrients, and the seed will wither.

This is exactly how the soul works.

The spirit is a seed placed in the heart, covered by the body. If we neglect the soul—by allowing sins, distractions, and unhealthy desires to take over—it becomes corrupted. This process of care and cultivation is what Islam calls *tazkiyah*, the purification of the soul.

The Qur'an: Nourishment for the Soul

Just as water is essential for physical life, revelation is essential for spiritual life. Allah says:

“*And We made from water every living thing.*” [al-Anbiyā', 21:30]

Our bodies come from the earth and are nourished by what grows from it. Our souls come from Allah, by His command, and their nourishment comes from the same source. The Qur'an is food for the soul. It quenches its thirst, restores its balance, and helps it grow.

When we regularly recite the Qur'an, reflect on its meanings, and live by its guidance, we are watering the soul and helping it flourish.

Why Purification Comes Before Knowledge

When Prophet Ibrāhīm (AS) completed the Ka‘bah, he made a powerful supplication:

“Our Lord, send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your āyāt, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them.” [al-Baqarah, 2:129]

Allah answered this prayer by sending Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). But in describing the Prophet’s mission, Allah changed the order:

“He recites to them His āyāt, purifies them, and teaches them the Book and wisdom.” [al-Jumu‘ah, 62:2]

Purification comes before teaching. Why? Because knowledge can only benefit a heart that is ready to receive it.

One of the greatest signs of divine wisdom in Islam is *how* the Qur‘an was revealed, not only *what* it revealed. Revelation did not descend all at once as a book of rules and prohibitions. Instead, it unfolded gradually over twenty-three years, following a precise spiritual pedagogy designed to transform human beings from the inside out.

For the first thirteen years in Makkah, the Qur‘anic message centered almost entirely on three foundational beliefs:

1. **Īmān in Allah** – establishing pure monotheism (tawhīd), removing idolatry from hearts, and reconnecting human beings to their Creator.
2. **Īmān in the Hereafter** – awakening a deep sense of accountability, justice, resurrection, and ultimate return to Allah.
3. **Īmān in Prophethood (Risālah)** – cultivating trust in divine guidance and submission to the Messenger (ﷺ) as a moral and spiritual authority.

During this Makkan period, detailed legal rulings—such as criminal law, financial regulations, and social codes—were largely absent. Instead, the Qur‘an addressed the heart, reshaped worldview, and purified intentions. The aim was to uproot arrogance, tribalism, injustice, and moral corruption at their source before addressing outward behavior.

This approach reflects a fundamental truth: laws do not reform hearts; purified hearts willingly embrace the law.

Once faith was firmly rooted and the souls of the believers were strengthened, Allah began revealing detailed commands and prohibitions in Madinah. By that time, obedience was not experienced as a burden, but as a natural expression of devotion to Allah (SWT).

This divine strategy was beautifully summarized by ‘Ā’ishah (RAA), who said: ‘If the first thing to be revealed had been: ‘Do not drink wine’ or ‘Do not commit zina,’ people would have said: ‘We will never give it up.’ But when faith was established in their hearts, the commands and prohibitions were revealed.’

This statement highlights a crucial principle: moral transformation precedes legal compliance. Without faith, laws feel restrictive. With faith, they feel liberating.

The early Muslims did not abandon deeply ingrained habits because they were forced to, but because their hearts had changed. Once they truly believed in Allah and the Hereafter, giving up harmful practices became a willing sacrifice rather than an imposed hardship.

Lessons for Our Time

This Qur‘anic method carries an important lesson for individuals and communities today. Genuine reform—whether personal or societal—cannot begin with rules alone. It must begin with *tazkiyah*, the purification of the soul. Teaching rulings without nurturing faith often leads to resistance, burnout, or superficial religiosity.

Just as Allah prepared the first generation before burdening them with responsibility, we too must prioritize strengthening īmān, cultivating love of Allah, and reviving awareness of the Hereafter. Only then can Islamic teachings be lived with sincerity, balance, and consistency.

The Qur‘an’s gradual revelation reminds us that Islam is not a checklist to be enforced, but a path of transformation—one that begins in the heart and unfolds in action.

A Lifelong Journey

Purifying the soul is not something we do once a year in Ramadān. It is a daily effort—through prayer, fasting, charity, remembrance, Qur‘an, and conscious obedience to Allah.

Ramadān, however, is a special opportunity to intensify this process. As Sha‘bān approaches and Ramadān draws near, we are invited to prepare our souls, remove the weeds, and allow the seed within us to grow.

Allah has given us free will. We may choose to chase the dunya at the expense of our souls, or we may choose the path of purification and eternal success. The Qur‘an makes the outcome clear:

“Indeed, successful is the one who purifies it, and disappointed is the one who corrupts it.” [al-Shams, 91:9–10]

May Allah help us understand who we are, why we are here, and what it takes to return to Him with purified souls. Āmīn.