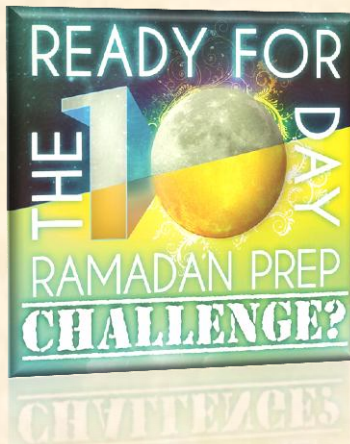


# Let the Hearts Submit!

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Dear brothers and sisters, I want to welcome you all to this wonderful initiative that brothers and sisters have undertaken. The topic I have been given is: Let us submit our hearts. When we are talking about the heart, there are a number of things to keep in mind.

I want to give a brief definition of the heart and tie that to the heart of Ramadan and what exactly is expected from us when we think of the heart of Ramadan. Most of the time when we think of the heart, we associate it with the piece of flesh that is beating in the chest. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “There is a piece of flesh within the body and if it becomes good, then everything else will be good.” The ‘ulemā’ have talked about the meaning of the heart from a spiritual and bodily perspective. The Prophet (ﷺ) was drawing for us an analogy, but at the same time, the word *qalb* in the Arabic language means the sensor. It is a spiritual heart and the most essential part of you that Allah (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*) has made the determining factor of whether or not you will enter Paradise.

Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*) says, “The day in which wealth and children will not benefit except a person who comes before Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*) with a sound heart.” We have a problem defining a sound heart, and a lot of people try to claim that they have a good heart. Usually when a person says that he has a pure heart and a good heart, it means that the person has feelings of insecurity and is a pretty good indication that the person does not have one. Usually when someone says that he has a sound heart, it means that he is involved in some kind of public sin and doing things that are obviously unIslamic.

Imām Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri said, “Nothing will benefit the heart if it doesn’t branch out of the heart.” The first and foremost point to make is that if you are the type of person to say that you have a good heart and that you pray in your heart, then it probably means you need to worry more about your heart because if your heart was truly clean, then you wouldn’t feel the constant need to make that statement and free yourself from any form of insecurity that you may have.

## Types of Hearts

What does Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*) call it a sound heart? The *mufasirīn* define this. Al-Qurṭubī says, “A pure heart is a heart that has found itself free of all forms of impurity.” There are many different *aḥādīth* which define different kinds of hearts. In a *ḥadīth* of Abu Sa’id Al-Khudri, the Prophet (ﷺ) told us about a heart that is full of the love of Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*). Wherever you put this heart, it is thinking about Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*). Although the circumstances may affect the heart somewhat, the heart is constantly full of *īmān* and love of Allāh and looking for things to remind it of Allāh. Any opportunity that heart has to remember Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*), it takes full advantage of it.



The Prophet (ﷺ) also said there is a heart that is enveloped or wrapped. The Prophet (ﷺ) said that is the heart of the disbeliever, and he conceals what he knows to be the truth, meaning he recognizes that this *dīn* and remembrance of Allāh requires a form of commitment from him, so he buries those natural inclinations he has towards Allāh deep inside his heart so that he can feel comfortable living the life that he is living.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said there is also the heart that is turned upside down and this is the heart of the hypocrite. Whatever goes into it, he automatically turns his heart upside down. If knowledge or a reminder comes to him, he turns his heart upside down and dumps everything out.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said that there is a heart that adapts to its environment. Most of us fall into this category. It has two sources: *īmān* and *nifāq* (faith and hypocrisy). One source is pure water and one source is impure fluid. This heart adapts to whatever circumstance it's in. If it is in an environment that nurtures a sound heart, then that heart is naturally going to be sound, but as soon it is in an environment where it is going to be tested, then that heart cannot hold its own.

This is something that is very dangerous because you don't want to be living on the edge in regards to your Hereafter. The Prophet (ﷺ) told us, "A person will be raised up according to the last of his actions." If you happen to be in a weak moment and your *qalb* is in an environment for a week or two that is not nurturing it towards *īmān* but rather is nurturing it towards hypocrisy and you die at this time, then you are doomed. You wasted your life, and you would have lost so much just because your heart was not able to hold its own.

### **Taqwa**

Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) says about the believers, "They are the people whose hearts have been tested for *taqwa*." *Taqwa* sometimes is called fear of God, piety, or consciousness of God. In reality, it is a combination of all of those things. Because a person is conscious of God, he acts in a certain way that shows that he is fearful of Allāh but he is not only worried about the punishment of Allāh, rather he has a fear that is combined with love and awe. Sufyān ibn Uyaynah said, "He loves Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) and fears him and is so much in awe of Him that even if there was no such thing as Hellfire, he would still feel obligated to obey Allāh and remember Him."

'Umar ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb has a very interesting commentary on this. He says that the person who is tested by sin and tested by *fitnah* – meaning a battle-tested heart – is more beloved to Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) than a person who has never been tested. For example, you may have a very nice ship, but if that ship stays docked, then it has not served the purpose of the ship and hasn't sailed. If you put a zoo animal out in the wilderness, then that animal is going to be ripped and eaten into pieces.

Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) is telling us that it is more beloved to Allāh when you have a heart that is tested and when your heart is able to face circumstances and restrain itself from desires. Notice the wording here. Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) says, "These hearts have been tested for *taqwa*." Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) says, "Fasting has been prescribed for you as it has been prescribed for those before you so that you may gain the special attribute of *taqwa*."



This is what we want to talk about today: what is *qalbun salīm* and what is *taqwa*? We know that the word *taqwa* comes from the word literally meaning to shield. You literally build yourself a shield in Ramaḍān. The problem is that most of the time the person who is actually somewhat concerned about Ramaḍān goes into Ramaḍān thinking with the mentality that “I’m going to do more and more good.”

## The Problem

For most people, Ramaḍān is just habit and culture, comes from our family members, and is what our parents taught, and they are not going to eat and drink until sunset, but they are not actually going to make any changes to their lives or read any more of the Qur’ ān. They will go to *tarawīḥ* and big parties and do some *khaṭm’l-Qur’ ān* hopping where they jump around to different *masājid* and take place in all of the *du‘ā’s* and take place in every ceremony they can possibly find but at the same time are not making any effort to change.

There is also a problem when a person tries to make an effort but that effort is misguided. A person goes into Ramaḍān sometimes with a mentality of only feeling like s/he needs to do more good, read more Qur’ ān, come to the *masjid* more and give more *ṣadaqah*. All of that is good and beneficial, but at the same time Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*) teaches us in the Qur’ ān that just as good deeds wipe out good deeds, bad deeds can also wipe out good deeds. Allāh says, “Don’t void your charity by praising yourself and glorifying yourself.” Imām Aḥmad talks about this and says, “A glance that person might take can undo his *ṣalāh* just as the *ṣalāh* can undo a glance.” Not lowering your gaze can undo your *ṣalāh*. At the end of the day, if this is what is taking place, then you are left with nothing.

Unfortunately, we have a mentality in our community that if we pray enough then this absolves us from the aspects of our lives that we know is unIslamic. Allāh sends Ramaḍān to you for a different purpose.

## Priorities

Sufyān Al-Thawri was asked, “What is priority? Is it priority to make *istighfār* and repent to Allāh or to do more good and glorify Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*) more?” Imām Sufyān Al-Thawri (*raḥimahullāh*) said, “If you have a dirty *thawb*, the priority is to wash that stain and not to accessorize the *thawb*.” If you walk into any place, the first thing that people are going to notice is the dirty stain, and your priority is to get rid of that. This is why Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*) sends us Ramaḍān.

Rasūlullāh (*ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) narrates a *ḥadīth qudsi* where Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*) says, “All of the actions of the son of Adam are for him except for fasting. Fasting is for Me, and I am the One who rewards that fasting.” Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*) then gives us the reasons. He ‘azza wa jall says, “Because he abandons his lowly desires and his food and his drink out of his love for Me.” Ramaḍān is not so much about increasing in *‘ibādāt* and doing more good as it is about getting rid of the things that are displeasing to Allāh in your life and purifying your heart. A sound heart is a heart that rids itself of every impurity.



Rasūlullāh (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) says, “Whoever does not leave in Ramaḍān ill speech, then Allāh has no need for that person to abandon his food and drink.” If he is not getting rid of the ḥarām things in Ramaḍān and taking care of the things he is doing to displease Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*), the things he should be fasting from throughout the entire year, then what is the point of fasting from food and drink?

## Two Extremes

Unfortunately, sometimes we get caught up in this disease. There are two extremes. The Prophet (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said that the nations that came before were destroyed because of their extremism. He didn’t just say that extremism is going to the extreme right, but extremism is also going to the extreme left.

There is the extreme where there is no spirituality, harsh heartedness and only an emphasis on law and minor acts of *Sunnah* and these types of things. There is the other extreme – often not identified as an extreme – which is also dangerous to a heart, where a person only focuses on matters of spirituality and matters that he deems good. Because of that, he makes a smoke screen so that he doesn’t have to deal with the problems in his life. He doesn’t have to deal with the sins in his life and the mandatory things that Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*) has placed upon him that he is not doing or the things that Allāh or the Messenger (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) commanded him not to do but that he is doing. He makes a smoke screen for himself by doing certain things that are good and excelling in certain voluntary actions.

## Attaching Our Hearts to Allah

This is something that we have to think about. If we truly love Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*), then we should do the things that Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*) loves. The way we attach our heart to Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*) is by doing the things that He loves.

I am going to draw your attention to an old TV sitcom. This type of scene is played out in many different shows with different plots and different characters. There is a guy and a girl and anniversary time comes around and the girl wants to go to a ballet or a chick flick, and the guy wants to go to a football game, so the guy comes on the anniversary and says he has great tickets, and she says that she doesn’t want to go to the game. The guy says that he spent so much money and went out of his way to get them, and she says she doesn’t want to do it. What ends up happening is that instead of building the relationship, they split or have moments of anger, but of course at the end of a 30 minute sitcom, life’s problems are solved, but there is a period of dissatisfaction and anger and hurt where the guy feels that he went out of his way to do something and the girl feels that he did it for himself and his own enjoyment. Every viewer who is watching is thinking that she is right and he did it for himself.

How do we relate this to Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*)? This is something that is very scary. Imām Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri said, “There was a group of people who claimed to love Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*), so Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*) tested them with a verse: ‘Say: “If you really love Allāh, then follow the Messenger (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) and Allāh will love you and forgive your sins.”’” This means that if you want to show love to Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta’āla*), show love the way He wants you to show love to Him and not by doing certain things and excelling in certain *nawāfil*



and voluntary deeds that are certainly praiseworthy and good deeds but neglecting fundamentals, which creates an imbalance.

Imām Ibn Al-Qayyim (*rahimahullāh*) said, “After the revelation of that *āyah*, the same group of people said that they were following the *Sunnah*, so they focused on certain aspects of the *Sunnah* and rejected other aspects, so Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*) revealed another verse.”

Allāh gave the characteristics of someone who loves Him. They have humility and only have pride in their *dīn* and nothing else, they struggle in the path of Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*) and at the same time are not worried about what people say about them. They are doing what they want to do because they love Allāh.

## Your Intention

This brings us to a very important question when we talk about purifying our heart. When you excel in a certain action that is a good deed, are you doing that good deed because you love Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*) or are you doing that good deed because you feel that good deed is yielding you some satisfaction? The object of your intention is no longer Allāh, because if it was, then you would be doing the things that are pleasing to Him. You would be purifying your heart with the things that are pleasing to Him. This starts first and foremost with getting rid of the impurities and not doing things which are displeasing to Him.

It is one thing to do things that are pleasing to Him, but in order to purify your heart and in order to have a heart that Allāh is going to look at and Allāh will consider a sound heart, we have to make sure that we are not doing anything that would disqualify us from the love of Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*). It is not about just excelling in some voluntary deed.

This is something important to bring up and something that is often overlooked. Imām Ibn Al-Qayyim (*rahimahullāh*) said, “As far as good deeds are concerned, a person who is a transgressor and a person who is obedient to Allāh are both capable of doing good deeds. As far as abandoning sins, no will abandon sins except for someone who is truthful.” Imām Ibn Al-Qayyim says the reason for that is the motive for not doing good deeds is laziness. If you talk to a Muslim who is not coming to the *masjid* that much and ask him why he doesn’t come more often, it is not because he has any objections to going to the *masjid*, but he has lost interest. There are people who come to the *masjid* anyway who will be transgressors. The motive for not doing good deeds is simply laziness.

The motive for not abandoning sin is because you are not willing to give up a desire for the sake of Allāh. Your heart is distracted by something other than Allāh and is engulfed with something other than Allāh. Your heart is either covered completely or turning over every time good comes and dumping it out.

Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*) said the essence of fasting is abandoning your desires because you love Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta’āla*) and because your heart will not accept doing something displeasing to Allāh. This is a whole other level. This is the ultimate expression of love.

You may find an atheist, for example, who likes to serve people, and we know that serving people is good in Islam and one of the core principles in our *dīn*. You may find an atheist who enjoys



doing something spiritual, but when will you find an atheist who says he will start lowering his gaze or start wearing *hijāb*? You don't see that happening because those types of things don't offer any sense of fulfillment.

I'm not saying that if you are doing them it is not out of love of Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*). The driving force may be love of Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*), but they also offer another form of satisfaction and fulfillment. Doing good things makes a person naturally happy whether he believes in God or not.

When you are willing to abandon things that displease Allāh, then that means your heart is sound. Your heart is not distracted. Most people fall into the category of hearts being distracted either with prohibited or permissible things, but their hearts are not focused on Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*).

Whenever we create that smokescreen for ourselves of doing a few good deeds and excelling in them, which makes us feel good and not worry about abandoning sins, what ends up happening at the end of the day is that the person ends up deceiving himself and falls into the category Allāh describes in the Qur' ān: "Shall I inform you of the true losers? Those who put effort into doing something they deem as good and think that it will get them Paradise but at the same time while they thought they were doing good, they were not gaining the pleasure of Allāh." Doing good does not absolve you of getting rid of the demons in your life and the sins in your life. Do the things that Allāh commanded you to do – the *farā'id*, the foundations. "My servant does not draw closer to Me with anything more beloved to Me than the things I have made mandatory for him." It is just doing what Allāh tells you to do. In Islam, we realize the goal through the means. We find spirituality in everything that we do and every act of *sunnah*.

Am I willing to go into this Ramaḍān and instead of just fast from food and drink actually confront myself and find out what things in my life can actually disqualify me from having the love of Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) and rid myself of those things? Or do I just want to have the whole feel-good sense of spirituality even though it is just superficial in nature? At the end of the day, the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "The people who came before you were destroyed because of this." The Jews were focused on the letter of the law and lost the spirit of it, and the Christians only took the spirit and did away with the law itself. As Muslims, we find the balance, and we purify our hearts by doing the things that are pleasing to Allāh and getting rid of the things that are displeasing to Allāh and by not fooling ourselves that if we do this one voluntary act and excel in it then it will absolve us of taking on a commandment.

### **Danger: Justifying Sins**

What makes it more dangerous is that if a person persists in this, then the person may justify the sin. His heart becomes so distracted and so attached to something other than Allāh and he is not willing to submit to a command of Allāh (*subhānahu wa ta'āla*) and starts to rationalize the sin and the distraction.

*Rasūlullāh* (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) tells us that the greatest disease of the heart is pride, and his pride starts off with telling people who are trying to correct him, "Who do you think you are trying to tell me what to do?" Then it goes to a whole other level in which he indirectly starts



telling Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*), “Who do You think You are to tell me what to do?” Why? Because he finds a commandment in the Qur’ ān that is as clear as can be with full evidences and no room for interpretation and has been interpreted in the same way for 1400 years but he is not willing to rid himself of that impurity, so he starts to rationalize.

To rationalize a minor sin is greater in the Eyes of Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) than to commit a major sin. It is human to make mistakes, but it is Satanic to start to justify them. You get to that point where you are not only unwilling to rid your heart of that impurity, but you are not even recognizing the impurity anymore.

That is where Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) gives us three types of hearts in the Qur’ ān. Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) tells us about a heart that is alive and well and is *qalbun salīm* and free of all impurities. Allāh says there is a heart that is sick and every time the person sins, Allāh causes there to be a stain on the heart. Then Allāh tells us about people whose hearts die. They are not able to concentrate on the Qur’ ān and do not find themselves in obedience of Allāh and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*). They reach a point in their lives where they cannot even diagnose themselves properly and do not feel like anything is wrong. The spiritual *qalb* is not beating anymore and is dead. The person needs emergency CPR and to resuscitate completely to come back to life. If you are not even recognizing anymore, then you have reached the lowest of lows. We have to look at those three categories and see which one of those we fall into.

## **Breezes of Mercy**

How does this all relate to Ramaḍān, and how do we put this in the grand scheme of Ramaḍān? Think very deeply about the *ḥadīth* where the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) says, “There are certain time periods where Allāh sends to us breezes of mercy, so present yourself to those breezes of mercy so that a person might find that the breeze of mercy touches him and he will never find himself in a wretched or miserable situation after that.”

What that means, dear brothers and sisters, is that there are certain time periods, certain days, and certain opportunities Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) presents to us where we can free our hearts of those impurities and the peak of them is Ramaḍān when Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) removes the key variable of distraction, which is *Shayṭān*. Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) causes the *shayṭān* to be locked up, so the war is nothing but between you and yourself, and you have to purify your heart. Now is the time to build the shield of *taqwa* and eliminate the impurity and make a change in your life to submit yourself to Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) and to make sure that the breeze of mercy touches you and to prepare yourself for it.

A lot of people say [www.RamandanPrep.com](http://www.RamandanPrep.com) is great, and we’ll hear a few lectures and feel better about ourselves and maybe learn how to read more Qur’ ān. The greatest way to prepare yourself for Ramaḍān is to set an environment and to plan your Ramaḍān so that within those nights of *tarawīḥ* and somewhere along the lines of quietness in secluding yourself in the *masjid*, hopefully one of those breezes of mercy will touch you and change your life. If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail. It is common sense. Plan your Ramaḍān out. Set an environment where your heart can have nothing but the remembrance of Allāh in it and there are no distractions and your cell phone is off and you have prepared yourself to understand what you are reciting.



If you are not setting that environment, then how do you expect the love for Allāh to come into your heart? It is impossible. You have to plan that atmosphere and make sure that you set the mood and atmosphere so that at one time you are going to change and something is going to happen.

Go into Ramaḍān with the mentality that if there is a major obligation from Allāh that you are not fulfilling now, then you will start fulfilling it. If there is something that you are doing that is clearly defined as impermissible in the Qur' ān and *Sunnah*, then you are going to stop doing it this Ramaḍān. This should be priority number one. A person cannot allow himself to fall into that disease.

## Reflection

So dear brothers and sisters, with that being said, Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) has given us this month as a month of mercy. I want to reflect on something very important here. The topic was: Let's Surrender Our Hearts. What does Allāh want from us? The Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) has informed us that the hearts are between two fingers of the fingers of *Al-Raḥmān*, and if Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) wants, He turns the heart right and if Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) wants, He turns it away. He doesn't turn it away because He is unjust or because He has decreed it that way out of no fault on our part, but Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) turns it away because of our own actions.

Allāh tells us in the Qur' ān: "When they turned away from Allāh, Allāh turned their hearts away." What that means is that when you refuse to allow Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) into your heart, Allāh will not grant that to you without any effort on your part to try to gain the love of Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*).

The first thing that we need to do is rid ourselves of the impurities because no matter how much you put into a cup, if it has holes in the bottom, the water will keep on coming out of the bottom and at the end of the day, you are going to still have an empty cup. The first thing is getting rid of the impurities so that we can have *qalbun salīm* because only the person with the sound heart will be able to enter Paradise.

The other thing is the concept of surrendering our hearts. Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) did not ask us to do things that are out of the ordinary. Allāh did not ask us to do things that would require an effort that would place a burden on us we cannot handle. Allāh has asked us to do things that we can handle and that we can bear.

## Purify Your Heart

I am going to mention a story of someone who converted to Islam less than two weeks ago. This brother comes to the *masjid* without having been given any *da'wah* whatsoever, but just through the internet he found the Deen Show and started watching it and found various things that brought him closer to Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*). When he came to the *masjid*, he already knew how to pray and how to make *wuḍū'* and already had five alarms on his phone so that he could get up for *ṣalāh* and make sure he was praying. Not only that, he was even sharing with the brothers that he had just bought an iPhone with 32 GB so that he could load it up with all of the music, but





as soon as he found Islam, he deleted all of the music on the phone and instead filled it up with Qur' ān. He was saying that he doesn't feel comfortable watching things on TV anymore. He is already lowering his gaze.

What is the difference between that person and a person who has been given the message consistently for years? That person came to Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) with a sound heart. He came to Allāh with a heart free of impurities. We ask Allāh to preserve that heart in that way.

The point, dear brothers and sisters, is that you see sisters who come into the *dīn* brand new. There is a special sister in our community who has brought so many people to Islam with good character and she said that from the time she took her *shahādah*, she never took her *ḥijāb* off. What is the difference between that sister and a sister who has been hearing the message over and over and over again? It is a willingness and coming to Allāh willing.

Anybody can do more good deeds and read more books and pray more but a person who is truthful is a person who is willing to eliminate things that are pleasing to him for the sake of One whose pleasure he values more than his own desires. This is the atmosphere that we want to create in Ramaḍān.

Make a commitment that you are going to change something about your life and rid your heart of some impurity and do an obligation that you know has been an obligation. Some people will say that they are not convinced about certain things, and there is a whole other topic on intellectual submission. The first aspect is that your heart is not willing to submit even though you know something is right or wrong, and then there is intellectual submission. Imām Ibn Al-Qayyim said, "A person who is not willing to submit his heart will never be willing to submit his intellect because Allāh said they have hearts that don't comprehend." This means that the people who find imperfections with the message of the Qur' ān and start debating minor points are the people who were never willing to submit themselves in the first place, and the only way they can justify their own imperfections is to say that there is something wrong with the message of Islam. What you find is that people who tend to argue about minor points in the Qur' ān and *Sunnah* are the same people who would be guilty of actions that don't need *dalīl* to prove that they are prohibited.

The Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Allāh has chosen certain days from your time where He sends breezes of mercy and if a breeze touches you, then you will be a completely different person." We are not talking about a superficial false epiphany where you are religious for a few days and then go back to what you were doing. I'm talking about an experience that happens in your life that you will be able to reflect upon for the rest of your life as the day your life changed. Creating an atmosphere and setting yourself up to change and making sure that you are ready for that change.

Let me give you an example of a very touching story. There was an imām in our history books of the name Mālik ibn Dīnār (*raḥimahullāh*). Mālik ibn Dīnār was known as the imām of the people of Baṣrah. He was from of the followers of the *tabi'īn* and was known to give beautiful speeches every night. One night, Imām Mālik ibn Dīnār stands up and as he is about to speak, his eyes are full of tears and he puts his head down and the tears are running down. He then raises his head and is smiling and people are looking confused. He said, "Do you know my story?"



He proceeds then to tell them his story. He says, “I used to be a police officer and a filthy drunk. I had no interest in worshipping Allāh. All I used to do was drink. I had no interest in praying and used to oppress and wrong people. One day I was walking in the marketplace in Baṣrah and saw two men quarreling. I inquired as a police officer what was going on, and one man said that the other had stolen a gift he had just bought for his daughter, so I sided with the man who was making that claim, and I made sure that the gift was returned to him, and I said to that man, ‘Tell your daughter to make *du‘ā* for me.’ That night I went home feeling better about myself and good about what had just happened. Then I started to think why I’m not married and why don’t I have a daughter of my own. But when I started to inquire, who was going to marry me? I’m a filthy drunk and everyone knew it. The only way I could get married was to buy a slave girl and free her and make her my wife. I bought a slave girl and freed her and made her my wife. Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta‘āla*) then gave me a daughter by the name of Faṭimah bint Mālik ibn Dīnār. I loved her so much and would play with her and spend time with her. I would sometimes have the wine bottle and she would push it over. I loved her more than the alcohol. Something happened one day. I was drunk and playing with her and throwing her in the air and dropped her and she died.”

These are the times that Allāh sends a test and they should send you back to Allāh, but unfortunately, what most people do is turn further away from Allāh when that happens. Instead of coming back to Allāh, he kept on drinking and became more of an alcoholic.

Then he says, “One night I had a dream, and in that dream I received my book of deeds in my left hand. When that happened, I realized it was the Day of Judgment, and I saw a huge serpent chasing me. I started running away from it because I knew that if it got a hold of me, then I would be devoured. While I was being chased, I came across an old man and asked that man to protect me. The old man said to me, ‘What would I possibly be able to do to stop that snake from coming after you?’ I kept on running until I came to beautiful condominiums on high hills and saw a bunch of children playing with each other. I saw amongst those children my daughter Faṭimah. She came running to me and embraced me. She said to the snake to go away, and the snake went away. My daughter said to me, “O my father, isn’t it time for those who believe and for those who have faith to humble their hearts to the remembrance of Allāh and to the truth that has been revealed? [the 16<sup>th</sup> āyah in *Sūrat’l-Ḥadīd*]. She kept on repeating that to me. I woke up that day and did something I hadn’t done for 17 years. I made *wuḍū’* and went to the *maṣjid* and prayed. The imām was reciting the same āyah that my daughter was telling me in my dream.” That imām was Imām Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri who would become his teacher. Mālik ibn Dīnār is one of the greatest scholars in history, and his life changed completely and he became a completely different person.

There was a man at the time of the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) who was secular and not Muslim, but at the Battle of Uhud he decided to become Muslim and they asked him if he was fighting because of his love for Allāh or because of some family obligation. He said, “I am pleased with Allāh as my Lord and with Islam as my religion and with the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) as my prophet.” He was killed in the battle, and the companions asked what happens to him. He never made *wuḍū’* and he never prayed and he never fasted a day, and the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) smiled and said he is from the people of Jannah. He put forth a very small action and Allāh gave him a great reward. What made him so special? He submitted himself. All Allāh is asking of you is to submit yourself.



Allāh is going to see your heart and see if it is sound. That is all Allāh will ask you for. I am going to end with just one point. I don't want anyone to get offended by this lecture and I'm not trying pick on anyone who doesn't do a certain action or who is guilty of a certain sin. As brothers and sisters, we are supposed to be reflections of one another and correct each others' mistakes.

I want all of us to go into Ramaḍān and set an atmosphere now. We only have ten or eleven days left. Set yourself up for success and position yourself for success. It is not just about being at the right place in the right time, but it is also about doing the right thing when you are at the right place and the right time. Position yourselves for success because that breeze of mercy might just get you in Ramaḍān and your life will change and you won't be able to recognize yourself. How many new Muslims have you met who say, "I don't even recognize myself. This is not who I was." The heart went from being distracted and covered to being completely full of love of Allāh. Once that happens, the heart is turned. If Allāh desires, He turns the heart away or closer to Him, and if you make that effort, He turns it closer to Him and your life changes.

I ask Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) to make this Ramaḍān the most incredible Ramaḍān for all of us. I ask Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) to make these words beneficial to both you and me. I ask Allāh (*subḥānahu wa ta'āla*) to allow one of those breezes of mercy to strike us and to completely transform us so that by the end of this Ramaḍān we won't even recognize ourselves.

Remember that here is one chance when the *Shayṭān* is locked up to fight just one variable, which is nothing but yourself, and to build yourself a shield against those impurities and make yourself stronger. No one of us should come out of Ramaḍān the same person that we were before. This is one of the three people that the Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) made *du'ā'* against when he said, "Amīn. Amīn. Amīn." The *ṣaḥābah* asked, "Why are you saying 'amīn'?" The Prophet (*ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Jibrīl was making *du'ā'* and said, 'He has failed and may his nose be placed in the dirt.'" Amongst the three people is a person who Ramaḍān comes upon and departs and he is not forgiven, meaning that when these 30 days come and Allāh removes the variable of *Shayṭān* and the distraction of food and drink and you are still not able to make a change in your life.

Make commitments to change something about yourself. I ask Allāh to make this speech beneficial.

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*With special thanks and du'ā's for Sister S.T.*

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