Friday Khutbah : The Battle of Uhud: Victory – Not Defeat

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All praise is due to Allah. May peace and blessings be upon His prophet Muhammad.

Fellow Muslims! Fear Allah as He should be feared for the fear of Allah increases one in blessings and removes calamities.

The Almighty Allah sent our prophet Muhammad to mankind after a break in the series of messengers at a time when the world was immersed in a deep darkness of ignorance. The Prophet and his companions started spreading the religion and the disbelievers challenged his message and unsheathed their swords to fight him. The Muslims faced them in the battle of Badr and realised a great victory by Allah’s command. The flag of Islam was raised high and the disbelievers returned to Makkah disgraced, everyone mourning the killing of his relative and lamenting over his misfortune.

The defeat was so painful for the disbelievers that they resolved to confront the Muslims again. They spent a whole year amassing as many weapons and men as they could to fight the Muslims. They left Makkah for Madinah in the third year of Hijrah in order to avenge their defeat during the Battle of Badr.

Upon reaching Madinah they camped at mount Uhud. Meanwhile some men among the Muslims who were unfortunate enough not to have participated in the Battle of Badr and were enthusiastic about Jihad advised the Messenger of Allah to go out and meet the enemy. The Prophet agreed and all the Muslims likewise were determined to go out and meet them.

After performing Friday Prayers, the Prophet entered his house, and emerged wearing an armoured breastplate, and declared,

“It is not appropriate for any Prophet who has once put on his armour to take it off again until Allah has judged between him and his enemy (by granting one victory over the other).”

The Prophet then set out in the company of one thousand men, one third of whom turned back home after travelling part of the way towards Mount Uhud under the influence of the head of the hypocrites; Abdullah bin Ubay. The Prophet proceeded with the remaining men until he camped at the trail of Mount Uhud putting the mountain behind him and facing the idolaters. He assigned some fifty archers under the command of Abdullah ibn Jubair to man a small strategic foothill and commanded them not to leave their position under any circumstances.

On the morning of the following day, the Prophet mobilized his army, inspected their armour, paraded the youths, sent back those of them who were still too young to fight and approved the participation of others. Among those he allowed to participate were Samrah ibn Jundub and Raafi’ ibn Khadeej; they were then but fifteen years old.

The Quraysh, meanwhile, also got ready for the battle. They were three thousand strong; among them were two hundred horsemen led by Aboo Sufiyan. Their intention was to put out the light of Allah and mislead His slaves, and the intention of the Muslims – who numbered only seven hundred men – was to attain victory from Allah or achieve martyrdom.

The Messenger of Allah urged his companions to fight and encouraged them to be patient and enduring.

The two armies then confronted each other with unsheathed swords, and a plethora of spears and arrows. Allah then gave permission to His Messenger to fight and the battle commenced in earnest. The Muslims initially gained the upper hand and Allah made them victorious. The disbelievers were exposed. Their standard fell and they turned their backs and fled.

When the archers saw the disbelievers defeated, they thought that there was no way they could make a comeback, and some of them left the position which the Prophet had commanded them to man in search of booty. Their leader reminded them of the Prophet’s order but his reminder fell on deaf ears and they left that strategic foothill.

Khalid bin Waleed – who was still a kaafir at that time – emerged from behind the mount where the Prophet had positioned the archers; realising that most of the archers had left that strategic position; and killed the remaining ten archers. Thus the Muslims were surrounded by the unbelievers: by their cavalry from behind and their infantry in front. So they encircled them, and a group of the Muslims were defeated while the rest were scattered in disarray. The unbelievers recovered from their initial defeat, returned to their fallen standard and began to cause a disturbance among the broken ranks of the Muslims. And aught befell them but that which was the Will of Allah; and He blessed whom He willed with martyrdom. The Prophet boldly held fast while most of his companions fled away from him while he called to them to come and reap the blessings of the hereafter. Some returned and regrouped around him. The disbelievers too made for the Prophet wanting to kill him. They gashed his face, smashed his teeth with a stone and ruined his helmet, and he fell down into a trench made by Aboo Aamir Al-Faasiq (the Godless). Ali ibn Abi Taalib took him by the hand and Talhah ibn Ubaidillah embraced him, and Mus’ab ibn Umayr was killed defending him.

The disbelievers drew nearer to him, but a group of Muslims numbering about ten protected him valiantly until they were all killed. Then Talhah ibn Ubaidillah fought them courageously until he drove them away but his hand got amputated in the process. Aboo Dujaanah also shielded the Prophet with his back and though arrows were raining down on him he did not move. Then Satan proclaimed at the top of his voice that Muhammad had been killed. This proclamation made the Muslims lose heart and many of them began to turn away. The Prophet then drew near to the Muslims and when they saw him, they gathered around him and followed him to the mountain path where he camped.

Ali ibn Abi Taalib washed the blood from the Prophet’s face and poured water upon his head. When his daughter Fatimah saw that the water only increased his bleeding, she took a piece of straw mat, burnt it and put it on the wound and the bleeding stopped.

The Prophet was so overstrained that when he wanted to mount a rock, he could not until one of his companions aided him. The Muslims became concerned about their fallen brethren, so the Messenger of Allah went to see the martyrs and found that many had been impudently mutilated. He looked for his uncle Hamzah, and found him lying in the wadi (dry river bed), disembowelled with his nose and ears cut off.

The disbelievers also went back to their mounts with their injured and dying victims. Thus was the Battle of Uhud brought to an end, leaving behind seventy martyrs among the Muslims and twenty two perished among the unbelievers; with our victims going to paradise and theirs going to Hell.

Dear Muslims! The Battle of Uhud was a victory for us, not a defeat. The battle is full of lessons and admonitions. Its events are a bright legacy that Muslims inherit generation after generation. Sixty verses were revealed concerning the events of this great battle and they had a great impact on the mind of the Prophet and he continued to refer to them even upon his deathbed.

This religion was only able to reach us as a result of the great and bitter struggle of the Companions and our righteous predecessors. These people underwent huge difficulties and trials for the survival of this religion. Anas ibn An-Nadr was wounded eighty times in this battle and the enemy so mercilessly mutilated him that only his sister could identify him by his fingertips. Sa’d ibn Ar-Rabee’ was stabbed seventy times with spears and arrows. In light of this, stop and think: What have you done for our religion?

The noble companions were by no means the best of this Ummah by virtue of their being the first to embrace Islam, but rather by virtue of their companionship and courage. They sacrificed their lives and bodies for this religion until it reached us in its complete form; some returned with amputated limbs, others with badly torn up bodies, and yet others returned not, leaving behind widows and orphans. Therefore give them their due estimation, thank them for their efforts and invoke Allah’s pleasure on them, for their Lord has expressed His love for them; He is pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him.

Brothers in faith! Acts of disobedience to Allah turn glory into disgrace. Many souls were lost during that battle because of a misdeed. Adam was expelled from Paradise because of a single sin and a woman was condemned to Hell because she starved a cat to death. Therefore obey Allah and worship Him, you will get relief from hardship and do not do any act that may turn your enemy’s weapon against you.

In this decisive battle, Samrah and Raafi’ took part in it and were martyred while they were only fifteen years old. That is an indication that Islam prevailed and has been made great on the strength of the blood of such youths among the companions, and not by wasting time and running after lustful desires. The parents of these admirable youths strove to guide them, and they reaped the fruits of their efforts. But what about us: what have our youths done for their religion? What are their ambitions? What are their concerns? To what do they aspire? How can we attract them to Islam and avert them from bad company? – Those friends who fail you when you need them the most. They pretend to be your friends when you are in prosperity and turn into your enemies when you are in hardship. An prime example of this is how the hypocrites deserted the Sahabah during their most trying period before the Battle of Uhud. Rather, keep the company of good people, for they guard you in your presence and absence, they strive for your benefit and defend you. Never despair of the reform of your society for success belongs to the righteous. Also do not despair of the mercy of Allah, for the Prophet endured persecution and injury until people entered into the religion of Allah in groups.

The end of all matters is in the hands of Allah; so always pray to Allah. The guidance of mankind is solely in the hands of the Creator of mankind. Consider the case of Aboo Sufiyan who was the standard bearer of the kuffar in the Battle of Uhud and yet was seen during the conquest of Makkah saying the Kalimah. Similarly, Wahshee, who killed Hamzah (the Prophet’s Uncle), soon after embraced Islam and later went on to kill the notorious false Prophet Musaylamah the Liar. Be afraid of Allah, lest you be misled, for mankind’s hearts are between two of Allah’s fingers and He turns them about as He likes. Pray to Him for continued steadfastness and strength of heart.

Be also aware that whenever a man falls into sin, repentance always remove them regardless of their multitude and magnitude. Consider the case of Khalid ibn Al-Waleed who led the disbelievers’ cavalry during the Battle of Uhud and by whose hand many honourable companions were martyred. When Allah opened his heart to Islam, he came to the Prophet and said,

“I make one condition: That you forgive me all my past misdeeds.” The Prophet replied him thus: “O Khalid! Do you not know that Islam negates all that precedes it, and that repentance erases whatever sins one might have committed before?”

Therefore free yourself, my dear brother, from the mire of sins, and repent for good deeds remove the evil ones. Also hold fast to this religion for much blood has been shed in its cause. Further, a man is sometimes tested through his close relations, but one must be patient with whatever they may do, for it was the Prophet’s relatives who came to Madinah to kill him and they did what most of the other unbelievers would never do by mutilating the Muslim martyrs. Yet, the Prophet forgave them during the conquest of Makkah. Therefore emulate the Prophet, be kind to your kith and kin and overlook whatever they do to you.

Beware also of dissention and controversy for they cause defeat, and do not dispute with one another lest you lose courage and your strength departs and be patient. When ever you are in prosperity do not be lulled into a false sense of security when you commit sins; for sorrow may be disguised beneath a façade of enjoyment. Consider the case of the archers who were delighted when they saw the booty and left their positions in order to get their share of it, hence making the whole army suffer a near defeat as a consequence. No condition is permanent. Therefore be patient in difficulties and thank Allah when you are in contentment.

Prophets were only human beings who suffered just as their fellow human beings suffered; they should not be raised above the position of servitude to Allah so as not to diminish their position. The Messenger of Allah wore his armour, fought along side his companions and Angels Jibreel and Meekaaeel fought for him, and even so his face was cut open and his teeth broken. Allah alone commands all that happens by His Divine Will. Had the Prophet possessed any power for himself then surely not a drop of his blood would have been spilt. Direct all your acts of worship to Allah alone. Humble yourself before Him; He will make your affairs easy for you.

Moreover, Uhud is just a mountain, blessings should not be sought from its soil and pebbles should not be picked up. It was at its side that seventy Muslims were martyred and the Prophet injured. If it had possessed any special benefit, what happened would not have happened. Leave your affairs to Allah, trust Him and take refuge with Him during times of hardship.

It is an ideal of manhood and generosity to appreciate the services rendered for the cause of religion. The ideal was exemplified by the Prophet when he kept the valiant deeds of the Uhud martyrs fresh in his memory until he died. On his deathbed eight years later, he prayed for them as if he was bidding them farewell. So always honour the great men of this religion. Aboo Sufiyan said,

*“I have never seen a person love another person as the companions of Muhammad loved him.”*

Allah says,

“If it had been Allah’s will, He himself could certainly have punished them (without you). But (He lets you fight) in order to test some of you with others. But those who are killed in the way of Allah, He will never let their deeds be lost. He will guide them and set right their state. And admit to Paradise which He has made known to them.” (Muhammad 47: 4-6)

Fellow Muslims! The only way to attain Heaven is through hardship and toil; the road to it is long and tortuous, filled with trials and difficulties. Only through being humble to Allah during trials does Allah grant one victory. Whenever Allah wants to honour a slave of His, He tests him and He raises his rank according to his humility and submission to Him. Allah has prepared for His believing slaves positions in His Abode of Honour, that can not be attained except through undergoing trials and He has also prepared for them means that can lead them to those positions through different tests. Submit yourself to the will of Allah, and be pleased with what He decrees for you.
One of the righteous predecessors said,

*“If it were not for trials and calamities (that we have in this world) we would arrive on the Day of Judgement bankrupt.”*

Each day of our lives is different, our conditions are always changing; a day of victory and another of defeat; a day of glory, and another of disgrace; a day of good health and another of sickness; a day of wealth and another of poverty. Make use of your worldly blessings to achieve prosperity in your hereafter and know that whoever gives precedence to this world over the hereafter has ruined his chances of success in both of them.