

FRIDAY MESSAGE

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The Essence of Fasting - A Clean Vessel for Divine Blessings

The famous Hadith, "Whoever does not give up false speech and acting accordingly, Allah SWT has no need of his giving up food and drink" (Bukhari from Abu Huraira), offers a profound insight into the true spirit of fasting. It reminds us that fasting is not simply about abstaining from food and drink; it is a holistic act of purification and spiritual growth. It is about preparing ourselves, like a vessel, to receive divine blessings.

Imagine a beautiful vessel, intended to hold precious water. If that vessel is already filled with dirt and grime, simply emptying it of clean water will not make it suitable. It needs to be thoroughly cleansed before it can truly serve its purpose. Similarly, the Hadith teaches us that merely abstaining from food and drink while continuing to engage in negative behaviours like lying, gossiping, or deceitful actions is like having an empty, yet dirty vessel. It remains unfit to receive the spiritual benefits of fasting.

Classical commentaries, such as those by Imam Nawawi, emphasize that the essence of fasting lies in refraining from all that is displeasing to Allah SWT. This includes both physical and moral impurities. Just as the vessel must be cleaned inside and out, our hearts and actions must be purified from falsehood, ill-will, and all forms of wrongdoing.

The Hadith underscores that if our fasting does not restrain us from such behaviours, it becomes deficient. It is like emptying the vessel of water only to leave the grime behind. The transformative potential of fasting is lost.

In our daily lives, particularly during Ramadan, this Hadith serves as a powerful reminder. It urges us to be vigilant about our speech and conduct. It encourages us to cultivate virtues like honesty, kindness, compassion, and integrity. These virtues are the cleansing agents that purify our vessel, making it ready to receive the divine grace of Ramadan.

Fasting, therefore, is a comprehensive act of worship requiring sincerity, devotion, and a genuine desire for self-improvement. It is an opportunity to cleanse our vessels, emptying them not only of food and drink but also of negative thoughts, words, and actions. Only then can we truly experience the sweetness and blessings of Ramadan.

Let us strive to make our fasting a means of drawing closer to Allah SWT, embodying the teachings of this Hadith, and presenting ourselves as clean vessels ready to receive His infinite mercy.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever does not give up false statements (i.e. telling lies), and evil deeds, and speaking bad words to others, Allah is not in need of his (fasting) leaving his food and drink."

The Untended Garden.

Imagine a beautiful garden, full of potential to grow vibrant flowers and nourishing fruits. However, the owner neglects it. Weeds choke the plants, pests infest the leaves, and the soil becomes barren. Simply removing a few weeds or watering the garden sporadically won't transform it. It needs consistent care, diligent weeding, pest control, and fertile soil to truly flourish. Similarly, fasting is like tending to our inner garden. Merely abstaining from food and drink is like briefly pulling a weed. True fasting requires consistent effort to uproot negative behaviours, cultivate good character, and nourish our souls with spiritual practices. If we don't tend to the garden of our hearts by purifying our intentions and actions, our fasting, like the untended garden, it will not yield its intended fruits.

The Unused Muscle.

Think of a muscle, designed for strength and mobility. If it is never used, it weakens and atrophies. Simply resting the muscle will not make it stronger. It needs exercise, training, and consistent effort to develop its full potential. Fasting is similar. It is not just about resting the stomach; it is about exercising our spiritual muscles. By abstaining from worldly desires and engaging in acts of worship, we strengthen our willpower, develop self-discipline, and cultivate inner resilience. If we don't actively engage in these spiritual exercises during Ramadan, our fasting, like the unused muscle, will not achieve its purpose of spiritual growth.

The Unsharpened Knife.

A knife, no matter how well-crafted, becomes useless if it is dull. It cannot cut effectively, and it frustrates the user. Simply owning the knife does not make it sharp. It requires sharpening, honing, and regular maintenance to fulfil its purpose. Our hearts are like knives. They are designed to cut through falsehood, discern right from wrong, and act as instruments of good. But if we allow them to become dull with negative thoughts, words, and actions, they lose their effectiveness. Fasting is the sharpening stone. It allows us to refine our hearts, polish our character, and make us more effective instruments of righteousness. If we do not use the opportunity of Ramadan to sharpen our hearts through sincere repentance and good deeds, our fasting, like the unsharpened knife, it will not fulfil its purpose of moral and spiritual refinement.

Hadith: There are people who fast and get nothing from their fast except hunger, and there are those who pray and get nothing from their prayer but a sleepless night. (Ibn Majah from Abu Huraira)

There are two joys for the fasting person: the joy when he breaks his fast, and the joy of when he meets his Lord." (Tirmidhi from Abu Huraira)