**February 2, 1917**

**Perfect Example of the Holy Prophet: A true guide for Acquisition of Spiritual Excellence**

I bear witness that none deserves to be served besides Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah.

After this, I seek the protection of Allah from the accursed devil.

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



Say: I am only a mortal like you — it is revealed to me that your God is one God. So whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and join no one in the service of his Lord (18:110)

By studying the life of the Holy Prophet, one can appreciate the unique excellences that make him an outstanding example to follow. It is through his excellent example that Allah the Most High gives us the good news:

Say: I am only a mortal like you.

These words coming out of the mouth of an ordinary person may not be of any significance. However, when they come out of the mouth of one who is possessor of unique excellences in the world, they become a source of remarkably good news for his followers. There are those mortal beings who were raised to the status of godhead by their followers. In face of such exaggerations, how could they have become role models? These words of the Holy Prophet: “I am only a mortal like you,” are a source of great strength and inspiration for his followers to emulate his character. If the most excellent of humans is a mortal like them, then no height of spiritual excellence is beyond their reach! Not to have the possibility of reaching a higher goal makes his example lose its credibility as an objective to strive for. The ­­­higher the goal the greater is the possibility of progress and harder the effort made to reach it. The only condition is that this higher goal is within the realm of possibilities. If a higher objective is put before us and we are told that it is impossible to get there, it becomes irrelevant. The objective should be such that if we can perceive it, it should also be within the reach of our effort. The Holy Prophet is therefore presented as a mortal whose excellent example is within our reach. He was endowed with faculties similar to us that he put to use. Through his excellent example great difficulties in the way of spiritual progress were removed. The rights of human beings and recognition of Allah the Most High are the two essential components of Islam. There is nothing within these two that a follower of the Holy Prophet Muhammad cannot acquire. The simplicity of his example has made it easy for us to follow and benefit from. Example of the previous prophets on the other hand has been relegated to the realm of the miraculous, beyond the domain of practice for their followers. Moses leading his followers by striking a path between two walls of sea may be looked at as a great miracle but has no practical value for our spiritual development. If Jesus was bodily lifted up to heaven, of what benefit is it to us? Neither is this ordained for us, nor does it have any practical value.

Let us examine the life of the Holy Prophet and see what beneficial influence it has upon us. Moses was commanded to lead his nation out of Pharaoh’s bondage.

**Followers of the Holy Prophet**

The Holy Prophet also has followers who are surrounded with difficulties on all sides and subjected to a variety of inequities and bitter persecution. He is also commanded to lead them out of it. The Children of Israel were given the promise of a piece of land that is not there in case of the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Neither are they commanded like the Children of Israel to all leave at once. The Holy Prophet never entertained the thought of first leaving Makkah. He instructs his followers to leave one at a time and stays behind. Under ordinary circumstances the lives of the leaders are given priority over those of the ordinary followers. This noble soul is worried about the life of his followers. He is the least concerned about his own and chooses to remain in the enemies den. Even his greatest critic has nothing but praise for his actions under these circumstances. His overwhelming concern is to be peacefully able to direct his followers out of harm’s way to a safe location. The moral lesson of selflessness manifested in his conduct can be the foundation for accomplishment of great tasks. If, however, through miraculous transformation all of his companions would have suddenly been transferred to Madinah, its moral impact would have been the least. This in the first place would have been impossible to accomplish! Allah the Most High subjects the Holy Prophet to all the trials and tribulations that human beings have to undergo in order to reach the goal of peace. This is only a minor aspect of the profound meaning implied by the Quranic words:

Say: I am only a mortal like you.

Observe just as Jesus is at one time surrounded by his enemies, Holy Prophet Muhammad is similarly within the clutches of his bloodthirsty opponents. He, however, manages to get out of there and find refuge in a cave, a short distance away from Makkah, while Jesus remains under captivity and control of his enemies. In case of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, Allah chooses not for him to remain in enemy captivity. He did make him reach a state of helplessness but ordained for him not to be held under enemy domination.

**The Holy Prophet and Moses**

Study the circumstances of the Pharaoh related in the Holy Quran. Moses is instructed by Allah the Most High in these words:

Then speak to him a gentle word. (20:44)

These words were a reminder for Moses that Pharaoh was after all a king. Our Holy Prophet on the other hand is not instructed to take a position of humility before his opponents. He is facing not one but many Pharaohs who form a delegation to visit and plead before him. Moses goes before the Pharaoh to seek freedom for the Israelites while in case of the Holy Prophet a deputation of the pharaoh minded request him not to speak ill of their idols. The Holy Prophet single- handedly prevails against the pharaohs of his day. Similarly we have the circumstances Jesus had to face. He received many wounds during his attempted crucifixion. Our Holy Prophet also receives many injuries in the battlefield of Uhud. He has a wound in his head and also loses two of his teeth. One difference is, however quite apparent between the circumstances of the two. Jesus receives his wounds while being held captive by the enemy. The Holy Prophet in spite of his injuries prevails over the enemy. At the very moment when the enemy thought that they had succeeded in eliminating him he stands up and calls out to his companions in a loud voice:

O! Servants of Allah come towards me, I am the Messenger of Allah.

There is also a shade of similarity between the circumstances of Jesus and the Holy Prophet. Abu Sufyan the leader of the disbelievers calls out, “Is Muhammad amongst you?” The Holy Prophet advises his companions not to answer. Jesus also faces a time of extreme helplessness but people think that he is lifted up to heaven. The Holy Prophet on the other hand flees from Makkah and seeks refuge in a cave. We cannot benefit from the story of Jesus but the actions of the Holy Prophet certainly give us a very useful lesson.

**End of the Strange and the Unusual**

Islam bestowed a great benevolence upon man. It did away with the trend of seeking and worshipping the strange and extraordinary happenings in religious discourse. The life history of the Holy Prophet has been presented in a simple way for people to understand and follow. It is true that we frequently experience events but are unable to benefit from them. If examined in a different light the same experiences can be a source of many useful lessons. People are inclined towards the strange and the extraordinary whether there is any benefit in them or not. The Holy Quran expresses this habit in the following words:

And how many a sign in the heavens and the earth do they pass by! Yet they turn away from it. (12:105)

Under ordinary circumstances one can find things that are in no way inferior to a strange and unusual occurrence. Belief does not demand an extraordinary sign to be understood. It has been the great accomplishment of Islam to get the field of religion free of this tendency towards wonderment. Muslims today, however, have fallen into this trap and have discarded the truth for pursuit of the strange and the extraordinary. The truth is that within the human frame Allah the Most High has created such potentials and strengths that are no less wonderful. What is it that enables Holy Prophet Muhammad, who is a mortal like us to completely change the condition and the character of a nation in a short span of twenty years? People allege that he accomplished this with the sword but one from amongst these critics questions, “How was this accomplished? The Holy Prophet is a single individual who is opposed by the whole Arab nation. What can a single sword accomplish under these circumstances? How can it alter their character and simultaneously subjugate them within a period of twenty years?” The fact is that if man wants to use his faculties he can perform wondrous tasks. Every man has this potential of accomplishing the extraordinary. How did the unlettered one who did not possess any treasures or worldly power become the guide for the whole of humanity. If we use these same faculties we can do much to reform the world.

**Use the Wisdom of the Holy Quran**

We have with us the Holy Quran that brought about this great spiritual revolution in the world but we fail to benefit from it. We are like the sick individual who is in possession of a remedy from an expert physician that can cure his ailment but he fails to use it. Can that sick person ever expect to recover from his illness who, instead of using the prescription, wraps it up in fine cloth and puts it on the shelf? This is our condition and how we handle the Holy Quran. Instead of reading and studying it we consider it sufficient to put it on an elevated spot in the house. We do not use its guidance. There are nations who are unaware of its teachings but on the other hand are those who have it but fail to benefit from it. There are many doors of knowledge that open up by study of the Holy Quran. Man can learn many useful lessons from it. The problem is that people find fault in others but fail to do self examination. They do not reform their own behavior and think that all the guidance is meant for someone else. This is the point of extreme peril when one only observes the faults of others. May Allah give us the opportunity and the will to use this spiritual remedy of the Holy Quran, “the healing for all humanity.” May we attempt to understand the Holy Quran and truly benefit from its guidance by putting it into practice! Ameen!