

## SERMON ON THE FROWNING PROPHET ﷺ

As-salāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh.  
Al-ḥamdu lillāh, naḥmaduhu wa nasta‘īnuhu wa nastaghfiruh.  
Wa na‘ūdhu billāhi min shurūri anfusinā wa min sayyi’āti a‘mālinā.  
Man yahdihillāhu fa-lā muḍilla lah, wa man yuḍlil fa-lā hādiya lah.  
Wa ash-hadu an lā ilāha illa Allāh waḥdahū lā sharīka lah,  
wa ash-hadu anna Muḥammadan ‘abduhu wa rasūluh.  
Amma ba‘d.

Today I’m going to speak about a very important event in the life of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. It’s a brief moment, but it’s incredibly important because it gives us many different insights into the nature and character of the Prophet ﷺ.

This event is connected to the beginning of Sūrat ‘Abasa, in which Allāh says:

‘Abasa wa tawallā  
an jā’ahu l-a‘mā...  
“The Prophet frowned and turned away,  
because there came to him a blind man [interrupting].  
But what would make you realize, [O Prophet],  
that perhaps he might be purified,  
or be reminded, and the reminder would benefit him?  
As for the one who thinks himself without need,  
to him you give attention,  
though there is no blame on you if he does not purify himself.  
But as for the one who came to you striving [for guidance]  
and is in awe of Allāh,  
from him you are distracted.  
No! Indeed, these are but a reminder;  
so whoever wills may remember.”

This is a very interesting and important passage of the Qur’an. One of the names of the Prophet ﷺ is *Yā Sīn*. Many scholars explain that as referring to the perfected human being. So if the Prophet ﷺ is a perfected human, why would Allāh call him out in the Qur’an? What kind of “mistake” is this, and what does it mean for us?

Let’s first remember the story behind these verses.

The Prophet ﷺ was in a gathering, speaking to someone who was wealthy and had high status in society—someone whose guidance would have seemed very “strategic” in worldly terms. In the middle of this, a blind man came—poorer, lower in social status—and was trying to speak to the Prophet ﷺ, seeking knowledge and closeness to Allāh.

The Prophet ﷺ frowned and turned away from him, continuing his conversation with the wealthy man. The blind man, of course, could not see the Prophet's expression. He didn't understand what he had done wrong; he was simply trying to come closer to Allāh and His Messenger. He tried again, and again the Prophet ﷺ turned away, still engaged with the other man. Eventually, the Prophet ﷺ did speak to him—but by then revelation had come, correcting this moment.

Now we might ask: things like this happen to us all the time. We get busy, we're talking to someone, another person comes up and we genuinely don't have the bandwidth at that moment. So why is this particular event so important that Allāh mentions it in the Qur'an itself? There are several layers to this.

### 1. The Prophet ﷺ: Infallible Messenger and Human Being

First, we have to understand how Islam presents the Prophet ﷺ. He is *ma'sūm*—infallible—in matters of revelation. He does not make mistakes in conveying the message of Allāh. At the same time, he is a human being. He eats, drinks, gets sick, feels pain, and has emotions. Both aspects are present.

In this sūrah we see that duality clearly:

- He is the chosen Messenger of Allāh,
- yet he can make a human misjudgment in a social situation.

This is very important for us as Muslims, and it also distinguishes Islam from certain Christian beliefs. In Christianity, Jesus is often understood as both fully human and fully divine—God incarnate. Islam rejects the idea of any human being being divine. The Prophet ﷺ is not God; he is a servant and Messenger of God.

Why is that important? Because if he is human, he can be a realistic model for us. We don't claim to be prophets, but we can strive to follow his character. And part of that character is the fact that, although he is the best of creation, he still had human moments—and when he did, Allāh corrected him, and he accepted that correction with humility.

For us, that's a source of hope. We make mistakes all the time. The Prophet ﷺ—who is the best among us—had a moment that needed correction, and Allāh still honored him, chose him, and raised him. So our mistakes do not mean we are hopeless. What matters is that we repent, correct ourselves, and keep striving.

### 2. True Status: Faith, Not Wealth or Rank

The second lesson is about how Allāh measures human beings.

In this scene, there is a wealthy man of high status and a blind, poor man. The Prophet ﷺ gives more attention to the wealthy man, hoping that his Islam will benefit the community, and turns away from the poor man. But Allāh reveals verses showing that the blind, poor man may actually be higher in status with Allāh.

Why? Because equality in Islam is rooted in *īmān*—faith—not money, education, language, race, or social status. A poor person can have more faith than a rich person. A person seemingly “insignificant” in worldly terms may be beloved to Allāh, while the powerful and famous may be far from Him. We see this theme in all the Abrahamic traditions: the warning that wealth can be a great test. It can breed arrogance—the sense that “I know best, I can shape the world how I want, I don’t need God.” We see examples of this today. Think of someone like Elon Musk—huge wealth, tremendous influence, and often a sense that he is always right no matter what anyone says, just because he has money and success. That kind of thinking is a spiritual danger.

Wealth in Islam is not evil in itself, but it is a test. Knowledge is a test. Power is a test. And the Qur’an is reminding us here that the poor blind man, who came sincerely striving for guidance and fearing Allāh, is more honored than the rich man whose heart remains closed.

So we need to ask ourselves:

- Who are the “blind men” in our own lives?
- Who are the people we overlook because we’re busy talking to someone “important”?
- Who is quietly seeking Allāh, while we are distracted by status and appearances?

Allāh was displeased not because the Prophet ﷺ committed some great injustice, but because he *frowned*. That small gesture toward a sincere servant of Allāh was significant enough for a whole sūrah to be revealed. That should make us deeply reflect on how we treat people we consider “less important.”

### 3. Constant Ranking and the Call to Humility

Human beings are constantly ranking each other. We do it almost automatically:

- This person looks more educated.
- This person is more attractive.
- This one is richer.
- This one seems more “successful.”
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And then we decide—consciously or unconsciously—who deserves our time and attention. Sūrat ‘Abasa is pushing back against that instinct. It is teaching us that with Allāh, the scale is different. The one whose heart is open, whose faith is strong, whose sincerity is deep—this person may be far above the one we think is impressive.

When Allāh corrected the Prophet ﷺ, the Prophet responded with humility. He realized what he had done and sought forgiveness. That teaches us another crucial lesson: when someone points out a mistake, we shouldn’t respond with anger and ego. Even if, in the moment, it hurts our pride, we should try to sit with it, reflect on it, and be grateful that someone cared enough to correct us. People who truly don’t care about you will often just ignore you. Those who correct you—especially parents, elders, teachers—are often doing it out of love, even if their way of expressing it isn’t perfect. Part of following the Prophet’s example is learning to accept correction with humility.

#### 4. Honoring the Disabled and the Vulnerable

The blind man in this story is traditionally known as ‘Abdullāh ibn Umm Maktūm. After this event, the Prophet ﷺ never overlooked him again. He honored him whenever he saw him and, remarkably, he appointed him as his deputy in Madīnah multiple times—around thirteen occasions—when the Prophet ﷺ left on expeditions.

Think about that: a blind man acting as the Prophet’s representative, governing Madīnah in his absence. That is a profound statement about inclusion, dignity, and trust.

Disability is not always visible. Some people have physical disabilities we can see. Others live with chronic illness, mental health struggles, depression, trauma, or pain that is hidden. Many people are carrying burdens we know nothing about.

Part of following the Prophet’s example is to be more empathetic—to pause and ask:

- What challenges might this person be going through?
- How can I be gentler, kinder, more patient?

Allāh tells us in the Qur’an to seek out the poor and the weak, to care for those who are forgotten. That is a core part of living our faith, not an optional extra.

#### 5. Dawah Through Action, Not Just Words

One of the beautiful things this community is doing is the food pantry—serving people who are struggling. This is a form of *dawah* (calling to Islam). Especially in a place like America, where Muslims may face discrimination, suspicion, or hostility, our *actions* can be our strongest message. In my work as a chaplain, I see how much loneliness and suffering exist in this society. Many elderly people die alone in hospitals or nursing homes with no family visiting them. Often, what they want most is not money, but simple companionship—someone to sit with them and talk.

Small acts can have huge impact:

- Volunteering at a food pantry.
- Visiting the sick in hospitals.
- Visiting elders in nursing homes—especially around times like Christmas, when loneliness is sharp.
- Bringing small gifts or sweets, offering a smile, saying “Happy holidays” or “Merry Christmas” in a kind, respectful way.
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People’s faces light up when someone shows them they are seen and valued.

This is dawah through action.

Maybe people are not ready to hear about the Prophet ﷺ or the Qur’an in words. The language, the culture, the religious concepts may feel distant. But they recognize kindness. They recognize sincerity. They recognize someone who listens to their story, asks about their parents, their children, their life. Those shared human experiences open doors.

If we live the teachings of Islam—strengthening our families, serving the vulnerable, acting with justice and compassion—we can change how people see Muslims, regardless of what the media says or what happens overseas.

## 6. Learning from Others: The Example of the Mormons

I mentioned an example from my own lifetime: the Mormon community in the United States. Decades ago, people mocked them, considered them strange, attacked their beliefs. Yet over time, many Americans have come to respect them because of their strong family structures, community support, and missionary work.

Their youth go on two-year missions around the world. They knock on doors, ride their bikes through neighborhoods, and simply ask: “How can we help?” Their theology, from a Muslim perspective, is very problematic. But look at their *actions*: low divorce rates, strong families, a commitment to service. And because of that, their public image has changed.

This shows the power of consistent, visible good deeds in shaping how a community is perceived. For Muslims in America, this moment in history is both challenging and full of opportunity. The society is deeply polarized—Democrats and Republicans tearing each other apart, anger everywhere, people disillusioned. Many are searching for meaning beyond the shallow messages of consumerism, politics, and media.

If we can embody the prophetic character—mercy, justice, humility, care for the weak—we can offer something real and healing to those around us.

Even if each of us touches only ten or twenty people in a deep, meaningful way over a lifetime, think of the ripple effect. That’s how hearts and societies change—one sincere, consistent action at a time.

## 7. Bringing It All Together

So what are the key lessons from this story of the Prophet ﷺ and the blind man?

1. **The Prophet ﷺ is our model and our hope.**  
He is the best of creation, yet also human. His moment of frowning becomes a teaching for all time—and his humility in accepting correction is part of his greatness.
2. **True worth is in faith, not wealth or status.**  
The poor, disabled, or socially “low” person may be far higher in Allāh’s sight than the powerful and wealthy. We must be very careful not to treat people according to worldly hierarchies.
3. **We must constantly fight our tendency to rank people.**  
Beauty, money, education, language—all of these can become tools of arrogance. Allāh reminds us that the heart and its sincerity are what truly matter.
4. **We must honor and include those with visible and invisible disabilities.**  
The Prophet ﷺ entrusted a blind man with leadership in Madīnah. Likewise, we must respect, include, and support people dealing with all kinds of challenges.

5. **Dawah is most powerful when it is lived, not just preached.**

Serving the poor, visiting the sick and lonely, being present for people in their times of need—these actions speak louder than any slogan.

6. **Humility means welcoming correction.**

When someone points out our mistake, we should try—like the Prophet ﷺ—to learn, adjust, and grow, instead of becoming defensive.

Islam, as taught by the Prophet ﷺ, is fundamentally inclusive. It centers the weak, the forgotten, the marginalized. It tells us to look for the people no one else looks for—and to see in them the possibility of immense faith and closeness to Allāh.

If we act with sincere intention, Allāh will put barakah in our efforts, no matter how small they seem.

**Closing Du‘ā’**

Rabbana ātinā fi d-dunyā ḥasanah,

wa fi l-ākhirati ḥasanah,

wa qinā ‘adhāb an-nār.

Rabbana lā tu’ākhidhnā in nasīnā aw akhṭa’nā.

Rabbana wa lā taḥmil ‘alaynā iṣran kamā ḥamaltahu ‘alā l-ladhīna min qablina.

Rabbana wa lā tuḥammilnā mā lā ṭāqata lanā bih.

Wa‘fu ‘annā, waghfir lanā, warḥamnā.

Anta mawlānā fa-nṣurnā ‘alā l-qawm il-kāfirīn.

O Allāh, we ask You for Your help and Your guidance.

Help us to do what is right, honorable, and just.

Make us people of humility and mercy.

Allow us to follow the beautiful character of Your Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

Make us people who care for the poor, the weak, the lonely, and the forgotten.

Use us to create a better world and a better society, starting with ourselves, our families, and our communities.

Let us recite Sūrat al-Fātiḥah for those who have passed away, for our ancestors, and as a prayer for guidance for our children and our descendants:

Bismillāh ir-Raḥmān ir-Raḥīm

Al-ḥamdu lillāhi Rabb il-‘ālamīn

Ar-Raḥmān ir-Raḥīm

Māliki yawmi d-dīn

Iyyāka na‘budu wa iyyāka nasta‘īn

Ihdinā ṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm

Ṣirāṭ al-ladhīna an‘amta ‘alayhim

ghayri l-maghḍūbi ‘alayhim

wa lā ḍ-ḍāllīn. Āmīn.