

The Historic Fadak Sermon of Fāṭima al-Zahra, peace be upon her

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It is quoted in the book al-Iḥtijāj of Shaykh al-Ṭabarsī from ‘Abdullāh b. Ḥasan who relates from his fore-fathers that when Sayyidah Zahrā was informed that Abū Bakr had confiscated Fadak, she put on her veil and cloak, and accompanied by some servants and women of the Banī Hāshim, came to the Masjid and facing Abū Bakr and the Muslims who were present, recited a powerful sermon.

Sayyidah Zahrā had worn a long dress (and was thus placing her feet upon her dress) and her way of walking was similar to that of the Prophet. When she entered the Masjid, Abū Bakr was seated with a group of the Muhājirīn, Anṣār and others and a curtain was put up for her and she sat behind it.

Lamentation of those Present

Sayyidah Zahrā heaved a sorrowful sigh from her scorched and aggrieved heart such that all of those present were affected by it and began to weep. The gathering was converted into a mourning ceremony and everyone was deeply touched. Sayyidah Zahrā then remained silent for a moment until the weeping of those present calmed down, and then she began her speech.

Praise and Eulogy for the Lord and Witness of the Unity of Allāh and the Prophethood of Muḥammad

She started her speech^[1] by saying: "Praise be to Allāh for His bounties (upon us) and thanks be to Him for all that He inspired; and commended is His name for all the bounties He created before our own creation, for all the common bounties that He bestowed (upon us) from His Ownself without even (our) asking for it, and abundant and complete bounties^[2], such plenteous and unlimited bounties whose numbers cannot be computed,^[3] and thanks cannot be offered for the duration and commencement (of the bounties), and whose perpetuity is beyond comprehension. He invited (His servants) to offer praise, thus resulting in an increase and perpetuity (in their blessings)^[4], and in lieu of this abundance (of bounties), Allāh desired that His creatures praise Him. Again, He invited you (to perform good deeds) resulting in bounties of this world as well as for the hereafter.

I bear witness that there is no other diety (worthy of worship) except Allāh – He is Unique and Unparalleled. Certainly interpretation (and result) of this witness (of monotheism) is sincerity, and it's comprehension has been placed in the hearts, and the mind is illuminated by its (profound) understanding. He (Allāh) cannot be seen with the eyes, nor can He be described with the tongues, and His state cannot be perceived. He is the One Who created all things without any past prototype, and originated them without having any past image and equals. Rather He created them with His Might and dispersed them according to His Will, He did not create them for a need, nor did He shape them for a benefit (for Himself), but rather (He did all of this) to establish His Wisdom and to bring their (the creature's) attention to His obedience, and manifest His Might and (so that) His creatures may venerate Him, and (He created to) strengthen His invitation by dispatching His prophets and friends. Thus He provided recompense for His obedience and granted punishment for His disobedience, (He informed) His slaves from performing

such acts that invite His wrath, and thus would gather them in His Paradise.

And I bear witness that my father Muḥammad, is His slave and His Messenger, while Allāh the Almighty chose him and selected him before bestowing prophethood upon him, and named him before selecting him, and chose him before sending him (for the mission of Islām), when the whole of creation was concealed in the hidden world, and they were in awe, and were in the extinction of nothingness.

Almighty Allāh was certainly aware of the consequences of all the tasks, and was acquainted with the occurrences of the ages, and conscious of the position of the destined. Allāh sent His Prophet so as to complete His commands, to execute His rulings, and to deliver His decisive ordinances. He saw the nation divided into various religions, addicted to their places of worship, worshipping their idols, denying Allāh despite their knowledge of Him. Then Allāh illuminated their darkness (misguidance) through the medium of my father Muḥammad and lifted the veils of obscurity from their hearts, and removed ignorance from their eyes. He (the Prophet) stood up among them for their guidance; delivered them from misguidance, enlightened their eyes from blindness, guided them towards the 'Straight Path' and invited them towards 'the Right Path'.

Then, Allāh took away his soul with affection and by his choice, willingness and submission. Thus, Muḥammad was relieved of the toils of this world and entered (the world of) comfort. There, he lives in ease among the righteous angels, and in the Paradise of the forgiving Lord, and in the neighborhood of the Mighty King.

May Allāh's mercy be upon my father, His messenger and the trustworthy one with regards to His revelation, His friend, the best among His creations, His favorite one; and peace upon him and Allāh's Mercy and Blessings.

Focus upon Memorizing the Qur'ān, an Exalted Trust of Allāh

You are the slaves of Allāh and you are the establishers of His commands and prohibitions. You are the possessors of His religion and His revelation, the trustworthy ones with regards to yourselves and you should propagate it (Islām) to other nations, while you deem yourselves worthy of all this?^[5]

A pledge had been taken from you in advance by Allāh and there is among you His remembrance and that is the book of Allāh (Qur'ān), the speaking one. It is a book of complete truthfulness and a bright light, the brilliant light. Its imminence is evident, its secrets are revealed, its apparent aspects are clear, its adherents become reasons for others to envy, it leads its adherents to the status of paradise (or the pleasure of Allāh), its listeners are guided towards salvation^[6] and through it are gained the illuminated evidences of Allāh. It determines the ordinances and prohibitions (of Allāh), its evidences are illuminated and its proofs are sufficient, it contains the virtues of the recommendable acts (*mustaḥabbāt*)^[7], freedom with regards to performing the lawful things (*mubāḥ*)^[8] and (informs about the) discouraged (*makrūḥ*)^[9] acts, and in it are written down other legal laws (of Islām).

Concentration upon the Philosophy and Aim of Divine Ordinances

Faith has been set so as to cleanse you of polytheism; *ṣalāt* (prayers) are prescribed to keep you away from pride, *zakāt* (charity) has been prescribed to purify ones' self and results in the increase of sustenance^[10]; *ṣawm* (fasting) has been prescribed so that genuineness may be reinforced; *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) has been prescribed to establish the religion; justice is prescribed to establish proper harmony in the hearts; the obligation to obey us (the *Ahlul Bayt*) has been prescribed to set up order in the community, and our

authority (*imāmah*) has been prescribed to save the people from differences.

Jihād (struggle) is the honour of Islām and a humiliation for the people of polytheism and hypocrisy; patience has been made a medium for recompense to be bestowed^[11]; enjoining good has been prescribed for the general welfare (of the society); righteousness with one's parents is a safeguard against His (Allāh's) wrath; kindness with one's relatives is a medium of increasing one's age and results in an increase of friends and relations; retribution has been prescribed so that people's lives may be safe-guarded^[12]; fulfillment of vows leads to forgiveness^[13]; consideration of accuracy in measurement in weighing commodities saves one from loss.

Prohibition of intoxicants has been prescribed so that humanity may remain away from filth^[14]; the prohibition of defaming (of adultery) has been prescribed so as to keep oneself away from the curse of Allāh^[15]; robbery has been prohibited so that the hands may be pure; and polytheism has been prohibited so that sincerity may be established in Allāh's Divinity.

Thus fear Allāh as you should, and (see that) you die not but as Muslims.^[16] Obey Allāh with regards to His orders and prohibitions for surely only those of His servants are conscious of Allāh who are endowed with knowledge.^[17]

The Decisiveness of the Prophet in Strengthening the Path of Guidance

O people! Know that I am Fāṭima and my father was Muḥammad. I say and I will repeat this again and again and I do not utter any falsehood, and whatever I do shall not be wrong.

Indeed an Apostle from among yourselves has come to you, grievous to him is your falling into distress, (he is) solicitous regarding your welfare, towards the faithful (he is) compassionate, (and) merciful.^[18]

If you look and understand, you will find that this Apostle is my father and not the father of any one of your women; he is the brother of my cousin (Imām ‘Alī) and not the brother of any one of your men and how fortunate is the one related to him (the Prophet).

The Prophet proclaimed the message and prevented the people from ignorance and polytheism and worked at opposing the customs of the polytheists. He broke their backs while their breath was entrapped in their chests. He called to the way of

his Lord with wisdom and kind exhortation.^[19] He broke the idols and crushed the heads (of rebellion) of the polytheists until they were eradicated and took to flight. Then, the darkness of the night passed and it dawned and the truth became manifest in its true form. When the leader of the religion (the Prophet) spoke, foam gushed forth from the mouths of the polytheists and they became silent; the degraded group of the hypocrites was annihilated and pledges between disbelief and animosity broke. You all started uttering words of sincerity (Monotheism) and you were among a group consisting of illuminated countenances and fasting ones – those whom Allāh intended to keep off from them uncleanness and purify them with a thorough purification.^[20] Indeed, you were on the brink of the pit of the hell-fire.^[21]

You were a community that was (considered just) – a medium who would quench the thirst of others and were a tool in the hands of the avaricious. You were similar to the place where hasty men come to take the fire (for their own benefit) and were being trampled under the feet while at that time, your state was such that you would drink water from the wayside gutter

and your food was the unclean hides (of animals) or leaves. You were the humiliated and degraded ones from among the masses, fearing that people may carry you away by force!^[22] Thus Allāh, the Blessed, the Sublime, delivered you through the medium of my father Muḥammad, while you attained this deliverance after he (the Prophet) had to face numerous difficulties and fight with the stubborn polytheists, the beasts among the 'Arabs and after that with the People of the Book (the Christians and the Jews).

Role of Imām 'Alī in the Defense of Islām

Whenever the polytheists kindled the fire of wars, Allāh would put it out; and when the adherents of Satan would manifest themselves or the beastly ones among the polytheists opened their mouths of envy, he (the Prophet) would dispatch his brother (Imām 'Alī) towards them. He (Imām 'Alī) would crush them and extinguish the blaze of their fire with his sword and he (Imām 'Alī) bore extreme brutality in the way of Allāh and strove to obey the commands of Allāh. He was the nearest to the Prophet of Allāh and the master of the friends of Allāh.

He was always ready to serve the creations (of Allāh), looking over the welfare of the people, endeavoring and toiling (in this way) and he was not affected with the censure of any censurer^[23]; while you were living a life of pleasure and peace, and were far away from the severity of battle, (you were in) enjoyment and security. Then you waited that we, the Ahlul Bayt, may be engulfed in severity of trials and waited to hear this news and in the heat of the battle, you retreated and fled from the battlefield!

Criticism Against the Treachery of Men

Thus when Allāh the Almighty exalted his Prophet from this perishable world towards the abode of His prophets and His chosen ones, the thorns of hypocrisy became manifest in you

and the mantle of your religion gave, and the astray ones, who were silent until yesterday, suddenly started shrieking; the degraded and mean ones came out of their burrows into the open ground, and the valiant ones of the polytheists of falsehood started roaring.

Now, these very people have taken the reins of authority into their hands and Satan has raised his head from the place of his concealment, inviting you towards evil – thus he found you to be among those accepting his invitation and you held him (in esteem) with the intention of securing position or being deceived. Satan invited you to rebel and found you to be (among the) base and meanest of people and he incited your rage and thus you became enraged.

Then you started to snatch the rights of others and entered the spring that did not belong to you and you did all of this when not much time had passed since the passing of the Prophet and the wound (of his death) was deep and our hearts had not yet healed, and the corpse of the Prophet was not even laid to rest in the grave!

You acted very swiftly dreading the outbreak of an agitation – beware that they themselves have fallen into the pit of agitation. Surely into trial have they already fallen, and verily hell encompasses the infidels.^[24]

Far be it away from you! What has happened to you? Where are you wandering while the book of Allāh (The Qur'ān) is amongst you; whose orders are apparent and judgements are illuminated; its emblems dazzling and whose enjoinders and prohibitions are straightforward. Did you not leave it behind your backs and then turned your faces away from it in disgust and turned to something else for judgement? Evil for the unjust will be the exchange;^[25] and whoever seeks a religion other than Islām, it will never be accepted from him, and in the next world he

will be among the losers.^[26]

You did not even wait that the tempest may calm down! Rather, you hastened to take the reins (of the caliphate) into your hands. After having acquired it (the caliphate), you started to ignite the fire of mutiny and you became engrossed in inciting the fire. You responded to the call of Satan, the seducer, and you intended to put out the light of the glorious religion.^[27] You started to destroy the practices of the chosen Prophet, then you delighted in suckling the delicacies of the caliphate and opposed the Ahlul Bayt in secret and in the open.

We have no choice but to bear the cuts of your daggers and the piercing of your spears into the body.

Reasoning of Fāṭima for Fadak

Now you presume that we do not have any inheritance from the Prophet – do you follow the customs of the (age of) ignorance? Is it the judgement of (the days of) ignorance (the Pagan era) that they desire? Who (else) can be better than Allāh to judge for the people of assured faith.^[28] Indeed, it is as bright as the sun that I am the daughter of the Prophet of Allāh.

O Muslims! Is it befitting that I am deprived of my inheritance? O son of Abū Quhāfah (Abu Bakr)! Is it contained in the Glorious Qur'ān that one should inherit from their father; while in your opinion, I should not inherit from my father? Indeed you have come with an unusual thing^[29] (attributed) upon Allāh and His Prophet. Did you then intentionally forsake the Book of Allāh and leave it behind your backs? Allāh says: cAnd Sulaymān inherited Dāwūd^[30]; in regards to the life of Zakariyyah, He says: (So grant me from Yourself an heir who shall inherit from me and inherit from

the family of Ya‘qūb^[31]); ‘Allāh also says: (And the blood relations are nearer to each other in the Book of Allāh^[32]); Allāh says: (Allāh enjoins upon you about your children – the male shall have the equal of the shares of two females^[33]); and He also says, (If he (the believer) leaves behind any goods that he makes a bequest for parents and (the nearest) kinsmen in goodness (this is) a duty upon the pious ones.^[34])

You assume that I do not have a share and allowance (in the inheritance) and that I should not inherit from my father and that there is no relation between us? Has Allāh in His verses (of the Qur’ān) not taken into consideration everyone in general and are not all (of the) classes of men included in these verses? Is my father discharged from the applicability of this verse or do you say that two people of the same community do not inherit from one another? Are my father and I not a part and parcel of one community? Then, are you more cognizant of understanding the general and particular verses of the Qur’ān than my father and my cousin (Imām ‘Alī)? Then take it (Fadak) until we meet you on the Day of Judgement – where Allāh will be the Best Judge, and Muḥammad will be the claimant on that day, and our destined time of meeting will be the Resurrection and on that promised day, the fallacious ones will be engulfed in deep loss and their regret (on that day) will be of no use to them! For every prophesy, there is a (prefixed) time^[35] and you will soon realize upon whom a torment (of tribulations) will descend which will disgrace him, and on who falls this lasting punishment.”^[36]

Intense Criticism of the Anṣār

Then Sayyidah Fāṭima turned towards the Anṣār and said, “O group of valorous men! The aides of the nation! The helpers of Islām! What is this slackness (that you display) in regards to

me while you are witnessing the oppression being meted upon me, but you still lie in a deep sleep! Did my father not say that the rights of a father for his children must be considered? How soon have you changed tracks, even though you possess the strength to stand up for my rights and are capable of supporting me regarding my claim! Do you then say that Muḥammad has passed away and there remains no responsibility upon us? His loss is great and the crack that has appeared (in Islām) is severe and the division is immense. Unity has been shattered, the Earth is engulfed in darkness due to his concealment, the sun and the moon are eclipsed, and the stars have scattered away! Hopes have broken, mountains have crumbled, the family of the Prophet has been lost and their sanctity has been dishonored after his death! This is, by Allāh, a great calamity and a grand adversity, while this calamity is incomparable and there is no other greater calamity than the death of the Prophet!

This (the death of the Prophet) had already been conveyed to you in the Book of Allāh, may He be glorified.^[37] You were reading the Qur'ān day and night in a loud voice, lamentingly, in a normal tone and in a pleasant voice. As for what happened in the past to Allāh's prophets and apostles – the command is decisive and destiny enjoined: (And Muḥammad is not but an apostle, (other) apostles have already passed away prior to him, therefore if he dies or is killed, will you turn upon your heels? And he who turns upon his heels will by no means do harm to Allāh in the least, and soon shall We reward the grateful ones.^[38])

Be aware! I have said what I wanted to say, even though I know that you will not assist me as this slackness of yours to assist us has become a part of your heart (your practice). But all of this complaint is the result of the grief of the heart and the internal rage (that I feel) and (I know that) it is of no use, but I have said this to manifest my internal sorrow

and to complete my proof upon you.

Thus usurp it (Fadak) and fasten it firmly, for it is weak and feeble, while its shame and disgrace will always remain over you. The sign of the rage of the Supreme Allāh has been cast upon it, and it will be an everlasting disgrace upon you and it will lead you to the fire of Allāh which will engulf the heart. Thus Allāh sees whatever you do, 'And soon shall those who deal unjustly know what an (evil) turning they will be turned into.'^[39]

I am the daughter of that Prophet who was sent to warn you against the severe wrath of Allāh, (Act (you) whatever you can, and verily we (too) act, and wait, indeed we too are waiting."^[40])

[1] This is the renowned sermon of Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Zahrā. The words of the Infallibles are far beyond the comprehension of anyone except their Creator, who created them as the epitome of infallibility and embodiment of perfection. Their words are replete with lucidity, insight and perfection, while pearls of wisdom and eloquence flow through their tongues. It is for this reason that I have mainly relied upon the book "Khutbae Haḍrat Fāṭimah" of one of the present Marja, Āyatullāh al-Uẓmā Shaykh Ḥusayn 'Alī al-Muntazarī, wherein he explains each of her statements in detail. Instead of translating the literal meanings, I have sufficed upon quoting their explanation. For further study, readers are requested to refer to this informative work.

[2] Refer to the Qur'ānic verse: "This day have I perfected for you, your religion, and have completed my favour upon you, and chosen for you Islām (to be) the religion." Sūratul Mā'idah (5): 3. This verse was revealed on the day of Ghadīr al-Khum wherein the authority of Imām 'Alī was established by the Prophet while returning from the farewell pilgrimage. Thus the 'complete bounties' in this case refers to the bounty of

the wilāyah of Imām ‘Alī by whose means the bounty of guidance is completed.

[3] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse: “And if you reckon Allāh’s bounties, you will not be able to compute them.” Sūrah Ibrāhīm (14): 34.

[4] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse: “And when your Lord declared: If you are grateful then I will increase (My favours) upon you, and if you are ungrateful, then verily My torment is indeed severe.” Sūrah Ibrāhīm (14): 7.

[5] Here Sayyidah Fāṭimah taunts the audience and says that you think that you are worthy of all of these great entitlements and satisfied with it, while the reality is that you do not stand up to defend truth against falsehood. Then what is the use of this status being bestowed upon you when you do not act and defend the rights of the Ahlul Bayt?

[6] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse: “And when the Qur’ān is recited, then listen to it and be attentive that you might be shown mercy.” Sūratul A‘raf (7): 204.

[7] They are the recommended acts which are rewarded, but if they are not performed, then no sin is committed. For example, the optional (nāfilah) prayers that either precede or follow the daily prayers.

[8] Permissible acts, performance or non-performance of these acts does not entail any reward or punishment.

[9] There are certain unworthy acts, which a Muslim is advised to avoid, but no sin is committed if one engages in them, Allāh’s pleasure is not in them.

[10] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse, “Take alms out of their wealth (O Prophet), you would cleanse them and purify them thereby.” Sūratul Barā’at (9): 103

[11] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse, “Verily, only the patient

ones will be paid their recompense without any account.”
Sūratul Zūmur (39): 10

[12] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse, “And for you there is (security of) life in retribution, O you people of understanding, so that you may guard yourself (against evil).”
Sūratul Baqarah (2): 179

[13] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse, “They who fulfill their vows, and fear the day the woe of which stretches far and wide” Sūratul Dahr (76): 7

[14] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse, “Intoxicants and games of chance, (dedication of) stones (i.e. idols) and (divination by) arrows, are only an abomination of Satan’s handiwork.”
Sūratul Mā’idah (5): 90

[15] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse, “Verily they who accuse protected believing women, unaware (of the crime), shall be accursed in this world and in the hereafter.” Sūratul Nūr (24): 23

[16] Noble Qur’ān, Sūrah Āle ‘Imrān (3): 102

[17] Noble Qur’ān, Sūratul Fāṭir (35): 28

[18] Noble Qur’ān, Sūratul Tawbah (9): 128

[19] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse, “And call you unto the way of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation and dispute with them in a manner which is the best.” Sūratul Naḥl (16): 125

[20] Refer to the Qur’ānic verse, “Verily Allāh intends but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanness O people of the House, and purify you (with) a thorough purification.”
Sūratul Aḥzāb (33): 33

[21] Noble Qur’ān, Sūrah Āle ‘Imrān (3): 103

[22] Refer to the Qur'ānic verse, "And remember when you were few and deemed weak in the Earth, fearing that people may carry you away by force, but He strengthened you with His aide and provided you with the good things (of sustenance) that you may give thanks" Sūratul Anfāl (8): 26

[23] Refer to the Qur'ānic verse, "Soon will Allāh bring (forward) a people, whom He loves and they love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the infidels, striving hard in Allāh's way, and they fear not the censure of any censurer. This is the Grace of Allāh, He gives it to whomsoever He desires" Sūratul Mā'idah (5): 54

[24] Noble Qur'ān, Sūratul Tawbah (9): 49

[25] Noble Qur'ān, Sūratul Kahf (18): 50

[26] Noble Qur'ān, Sūrat Āle 'Imrān (3): 85

[27] Refer to the Qur'ānic verses, "They intend to put out the Light of Allāh with (the blow of) their mouths, and disdains Allāh save that He perfects His Light, though the infidels may detest this." Sūratul Tawbah (9): 32 and "They intend they to put out the Light of Allāh with their mouths, but Allāh will perfect His Light, though the disbelievers may be averse." (Sūratul Saff (61): 8)

[28] Noble Qur'ān, Sūratul Mā'idah (5): 50

[29] Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Maryam (19): 27

[30] Noble Qur'ān, Sūratul Naml (27): 16

[31] Noble Qur'ān, Sūrah Maryam (19): 5-6

[32] Noble Qur'ān, Sūratul Anfāl (8): 75

[33] Noble Qur'ān, Sūratul Nisā' (4): 11

[34] Noble Qur'ān, Sūratul Baqarah (2): 180

[35] Noble Qur'ān, Sūratul An'ām (6): 67

[36] Noble Qur'ān, Sūrat Hūd (11): 39

[37] Refer to the Qur'ānic verse, "And Muḥammad is not but an Apostle, (other) Apostles have already passed away prior to him, therefore if he dies or be slain, will you turn upon your heels?" (Sūrat Āle 'Imrān (3): 144)

[38] Noble Qur'ān, Sūrat Āle 'Imrān (3): 144

[39] Noble Qur'ān, Sūratul Shu'arā (26): 227

[40] Noble Qur'ān, Sūrat Hūd (10): 121-122