Allah states (in the Holy Qur’an) that “We are your friends in this world’s life and in the Hereafter” (41:31).

In other words, Allah is stating that He is a Friend of the righteous in this world and the next. Implicit in this verse is also the denial of the belief held by some that angels descend only at the time of death and do not descend at any other time in this life. If that were the case, how is it that Allah is a Friend in this world and the next?

It is indeed a blessing that those who are the friends of Allah are able to see angels. The next world is one in which we believe through our faith but a righteous person is shown the next world in this very life. Righteous people find Allah in this life – they see Him and He speaks to them. If this is not available to a person then his death and his departure from this world will be a very bad one. A past saint has stated that “He who has never had a true dream will face a frightful end.” The Holy Qur’an holds this to be a sign of a true believer. Take note that he who does not possess this sign, does not possess righteousness.

Hence, this should be a prayer from all of us that this condition is fulfilled in us, that Allah may grant us the blessing of revelation, of true dreams and of visions. This is a special characteristic of a true believer and, hence, it should be present. There are many other blessings that are granted to the one who is righteous. For instance, in the opening chapter of the Holy Qur’an, Surah Al Fatiha, Allah teaches a believer to pray thus: “Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray” (1:6-7).

In other words, “guide us to that path which is straight and which is the path of those who are the recipients of Your blessing and grace.” This prayer has been taught so that a human being should acquire high resolve and should understand the intention of the Creator. That intention is that this Ummah, the followers of the Holy Prophet (sas) of Islam, should not spend their life like animals; rather that all veils should be removed (to reveal true knowledge of Allah). It is the belief of the Shi’a sect that attainment of knowledge of Allah came to an end after the twelve Imams. Contrary to this, the prayer (taught in Surah Al Fatiha) shows that Allah had intended beforehand that the righteous should attain the level of prophets and the pious. Another point that is made through this is that a human being has been granted many capabilities that need to be nurtured and developed. A goat’s capabilities cannot develop as it is not a human being. When a person of high resolve hears the stories of prophets and messengers, he does not only wish to have faith in the blessings granted to that group, but he also wishes also to gain knowledge of them. He desires to acquire the different levels of knowledge regarding those blessings, beginning with knowledge that is certain (but based on inference), then certainty that is witnessed to the certainty of experience and absolute truth.

There are three stages of knowledge: knowledge by way of certainty of inference, knowledge by way of certainty that is witnessed, and the stage of knowledge acquired through the certainty of
experience. For example, being certain of the existence of fire, having seen smoke rising from a place, is inferred knowledge that is certain. However, to see the fire with one’s own eyes is certainty that is witnessed, but even higher is the stage of absolute certainty of truth. An example of this would be like putting one’s hand in the fire and from the burning sensation and the movement of the fire ascertaining that the fire is actually there and real. How unfortunate is the person who does not possess any of the three levels of knowledge (of the spiritual realm).

[Malfuzat, Volume 1, pp. 18-20.]

No matter how many holy people and saints there may have been, they all spent their time striving and perfecting their worship. Baba Fareed Sahib and all the other past holy and saintly people reached their high station due to striving and carrying out special and strenuous spiritual exercises. Moreover, these people followed fully and strictly the practice of the Holy Prophet (sas) and it was only after such strict practice and much effort that their pride, their arrogance and their egoism left them. They became as if they had gone through the eye of a needle – through which all such people have to pass. It is only after much strenuous efforts that such people attain their station. It is such people whose prayers are accepted; otherwise, you see that a physician’s medicine has no efficacy unless one exercises abstinence. So is the secret of the acceptance of prayer – prayer has no efficacy unless a person abstains fully (from all that is disliked by Allah).

Some people have made up some false stories and tales about some holy people. These, too, become a huge stumbling block in the path of ordinary people and become the cause of stumbling for a great many people. One such story has been made up about Hazrat Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani that whoever came before him was turned into a saint by his attention. Remember that no one has ever attained a special and high station without bringing about a death over himself or without fully following the tradition and practice of the Holy Prophet (sas). However, this much is certainly true that without there being a capability, nothing can be achieved. The capacities of some people and their nature is made such by Allah that pride, arrogance, conceit and other similar ills are easily extricated and it is as if these had never existed. Just as a seed becomes like dust when it is buried in the earth and then Allah’s power makes it grow, so these people first lose everything in the path of Allah and then Allah brings them back to life, makes them develop and spread, and their acceptance by other people is made easy. Hence, if a person steadfastly bears the difficulties and tribulations that from time to time confront him by way of a test from Allah, and bears all this without laying down any conditions or limits and leaves his affair to Allah, then Allah, through His blessing, shows him all that makes his faith stronger and his heart wholesome. However, when people are stubborn and wish to make Allah move according to their wishes, then such people remain deprived. After this, what care can Allah have for such people? Allah is indifferent. There are tens of millions of His servants. If a person does not accept, that is up to him, but such a person then joins those who are destined for hell. In showing signs, Allah does not take any notice of people’s wishes and plans. Manifestation of signs also depends upon the capabilities (of people). If a grain that has been chewed is sown within the earth, it will not grow or develop. Similarly, unfortunate people cannot become the heirs of Allah’s blessings and signs.

[Malfuzat, Volume 10, pp. 208-209.]
Allah is not pleased with mere words. You should become so true that your sincerity and your anguish reach up to the heavens. Allah protects and blesses the person He considers to have a heart that is truthful and full of love. He looks at hearts and peeks into them. He does not care for empty words. He enters the heart that has been cleansed thoroughly and purified of all impurities. He enters such a heart and makes His home there. On the other hand, the heart in which there remain impurities is declared to be an accursed one. Remember that faith without good deeds is an incomplete faith. How is it possible for true faith not to be accompanied by good deeds? Make your faith and belief total. People do not strengthen their faith and yet they complain that they are not receiving the promised blessings and rewards. Allah has, of course, promised: “And whoever keeps his duty to Allah, He ordains a way out for him, And gives him sustenance from whence he imagines” (65:2-3).

That is, he who is righteous and is so in the sight of Allah is safeguarded by Allah against all hardship and Allah grants him provisions from sources that are unimaginable. This promise of Allah is true and it is our belief that Allah is Most Gracious and Most Merciful and He fulfils His promises. He who becomes Allah’s is saved by Allah from humiliation and is fully taken care of by Allah. However, those who declare themselves to be righteous and yet complain that they have not received the accompanying rewards, leave us wondering as to which of their two claims to believe. [Malfuzat Volume 5, pp. 243-244]

Allah, Most High, makes men pass through different trials so that He may see whether the believer gives precedence to his faith over the material world. There are many who profess a belief in Allah but when they find such belief interfering with their material advantages they forsake the cause of Allah, or when they have any fear of harm from rulers, they abandon the path of Allah. Such people are, in fact, without faith and they do not know that in reality it is Allah Almighty Who is the Judge over all judges. Doubtless, the path of Allah is a difficult path and unless a person (undergoes such extreme striving in the path of Allah) that is akin to tearing off one’s own skin, he cannot find acceptance before Allah. Do we not dislike a servant who is disloyal? Is it not true that a servant who is not faithful to his master and is not constant in his duty is not looked upon with honour anywhere? Thus it is also in the presence of Allah. The person who forsakes his Divine Master for the sake of limited material gain is the most disloyal and faithless of persons.

Taking the Bai’at (Oath of Allegiance) is to give oneself up to Allah. It means that the person entering into Bai’at sells his life to Allah. It is wrong to think that one who walks in the path of Allah ultimately suffers loss. He who serves Allah faithfully cannot suffer any loss. Loss is his who is false, who breaks the covenant he has made with Allah for the sake of this world. Let him who is guilty of such disloyalty remember that no ruler or king would be able to deliver him when the hand of Allah is upon him. He has to eventually meet the Judge of all judges. It is, therefore, necessary for every true believer to have faith in Allah, Who is the King of all the heavens and the earth, and to turn to Allah with true repentance. This is certainly a most difficult thing to achieve – it is only possible when Allah makes the heart move in that direction. Hence, it requires much prayer.
The person who walks along the path of Allah with true sincerity is granted extraordinary power and capability. The heart of the believer has within it a power of attraction such that other people are drawn to him. I cannot understand why people should not be drawn to you if there is within you sufficient attraction of love in the path of Allah and a magnetic power generated within you. [Malfuzat, Volume 7, pp. 29-30.]

Some people consider that merely by visiting some holy person and without any effort or inner purification they will be able to join the fold of the Truthful. This is just wishful thinking. You should study the Holy Qur’an to see that you cannot win the pleasure of Allah unless you too endure hardship and tribulation as did the prophets of Allah. Some of their ordeals and suffering were so extreme that (in the words of the Holy Qur’an): “Distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently, so that the Messenger and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allah come? Now surely the help of Allah is nigh!” (2:214).

It has always been the case that the servants of Allah have been put through many an ordeal and hardship before they were accepted by Allah.

The Sufis have written about two paths that lead to success in this struggle: one is the path of saluk. This is the path of people who, by using their own intelligence and wisdom, adopt the path of Allah and His Prophet (sas). Allah, addressing the Holy Prophet (sas) states in the Holy Qur’an: “If you love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you” (3:31).

That is, if you wish to become the loved ones of Allah then you should follow the path of the Holy Prophet (sas). He is the perfect guide and he is the Prophet who underwent such extreme hardship and suffering that the like of it has never been seen anywhere in the world. His quest was such that it did not let him rest even for a day. The followers (of this Prophet) will only be those who truly and sincerely follow his every word and every deed. The true follower is he who follows in every way. The person who has scant regard (for Divine injunctions) and a harsh attitude (towards other people) is not liked by Allah. Such a person will, instead, come under the wrath of Allah.

The injunction to follow the Holy Prophet (sas) places an obligation on the seeker to first study the whole history of the Holy Prophet (sas) and then to follow in his footsteps. This is what is meant by saluk, (that is, “initiation”). There are in this path numerous ordeals and hardships. It is only after showing steadfastness in the face of numerous hardships that a person becomes a salik, that is, a “devotee.”

The status of the people on the path of jazb is greater than those on the path of saluk. (The term jazb implies absorption in the love of Allah.) Those who strive on the path of jazb are not left at the stage of saluk. Allah deliberately puts them through ordeals and tribulations in order to draw them closer to Himself through the eternal power of absorption, that is, jazba-e-azli. All the Prophets of Allah were majzub, that is, they were drawn to Allah and were absorbed in Allah.

When the human soul is faced with painful ordeals and tribulations, the experience and the consequent humility make it radiant, just as iron or glass, while possessing the capacity to shine,
do so only after they have undergone a lengthy process of burnishing and then they shine so brightly that in them is reflected the face of the person who looks into it. Striving in the path of Allah also works as a process of burnishing. The burnishing of the heart should be to such a degree that the “face” is reflected in the resulting “mirror” (of the “heart”). What is meant by “reflection of the face”? The meaning of this is to become the fulfilment of the saying, “Create within you morals in accordance with the character of Allah.” The heart of the salik, that is, the devotee, is a “mirror” that is burnished so much through undergoing experiences of great suffering and tribulation that the reflection of the moral qualities of the Holy Prophet (sas) are fixed upon it. This occurs at a time when, having undergone numerous spiritual exercises and inner purification, there remains no resentment or impurity within. It is only then that this status is attained. Every Muslim believer needs this kind of cleansing to some extent. No believer will find salvation whilst being without the “mirror” of the heart.

[Malfuzat, Volume 1, pp. 27-28.]