

FRIDAY SERMON OF IMAM ZAFRULLAH DOMUN

29 JULY 2011

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter of *Al Fatiha* Imam Zafrullah Domun read the following verse of the Holy Quran:

Yaa ayyohal lazina aamanou koteba alaykomous siyaamon kama koteba alal lazina min qablekoum la'allakoum tattakoun. (2:184)

As most members are aware the new month of Ramadan will start early next week. According to the documents that I have consulted it appears that the new moon will be born on Saturday 30th July at 10:40 PM. It will be visible after at least 20 hours. This will take us to 6h40 PM on Sunday night. In these circumstances it is most unlikely that the moon would be visible. Hence the first day of fasting will most likely be on Tuesday 2nd of August 2011. Personally I feel a bit ill at ease with this situation. I think that we should start fasting on Monday 1st of August because the first day of Ramadan will be Sunday next although the moon might not be visible on Saturday night. But we all know that it will be up there in the sky for 20 hours. At the time of the Holy Prophet ^{saw} the people did not have the means to make exact calculations regarding the phases of the moon and other heavenly bodies and so they had to see it to start and end the fast. But these days at any moment we are well aware of the position of the moon in the sky and we do not rely on guesswork. Unfortunately for the time being we do not have much say into this matter. I think it should be discussed and a consensus should be developed around it.

Anyhow as good Muslims we should be grateful to Allah that once again He will allow us to witness this blessed month and we pray and hope that He will help us to enjoy all its benefits (spiritual and material) in full measure. In the verse which I read in the beginning Allah says “O people who believe fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those who were before you so that you might be righteous.” No one really knows the degree of our righteousness but Allah because He is the only one who knows the innermost secrets of our heart. Hence one of the most important objectives of fasting should be that the degree of our righteousness should be greater than what it was in the beginning of the month of Ramadan. If that main objective is missing it would mean that we do not understand the purpose of this fast which Allah has prescribed for our spiritual wellbeing as He prescribed it for those people who came before us.

Ramadan is an occasion for all of us whether we are young or advanced in age to try to obey Allah more than we have been doing throughout our life. Most young people let us say those who are below the age of thirty have been fasting for some time now. Some may have started fasting at around twelve years old and some may have started a bit later. Anyhow all have some experience now in fasting. When all these young people grew up they became more conscious of where they might falter and how fasting may help in preventing them from approaching some types of sin. For those who are advanced in age I think they use the month of Ramadan to deepen their commitment to a life devoted to Allah. They try to overcome all types of negligence and they strive to get forgiveness for all their past sins. So for every Muslim whatever his age group there is enormous physical and spiritual benefits that may be sought and got during the month of Ramadan. So now that there are still a few days before the beginning of this blessed month we should all resolve to make the most of it. Furthermore we should also be determined to make the good habits that we will develop during this month to stay with us even after the month is gone.

When we fast we have been asked by Allah to refrain from eating and drinking and from having sex from dawn to dusk. Those who are on a journey and who are sick will have to replace the number of days that they could not fast in the other months besides Ramadan. Whereas for those who cannot bear the burden of fasting Allah has given them expiation – they have to feed a poor person for the duration of the month of Ramadan with the equivalent of the type of food that they eat. These days some people give the equivalent amount of money to a charity organization to be distributed among the poor. So the coming of the month of Ramadan brings along a lot of physical, spiritual and social benefits for the Muslim society. That is why when the Holy Prophet ^{saw} spoke about the grandeur of this month he used the word “*azim*” to qualify it. To be brief the Arabic word “*azim*” denotes such greatness that it is difficult for our mind to assess. In other words there are so many benefits to be derived from this month that we cannot truly assess its extent. The words of the Holy Quran where Allah says “*wa an tasoumou khayroul lakoum in kountoum ta’lamoune*” also points to a similar meaning. That is to say that fasting is immensely beneficial to us if only we could know all its benefits.

It is a fact that when we truly understand the benefits of any good deed we would be inclined to practice it. These days the benefits of physical exercise is being explained on television so that the people might understand how it can help them to stay in good health. Hence we see that there are more people who are practicing physical exercises. Similarly there are many articles and TV or radio programmes that speak about how we should eat and consequently we see that those who understand these benefits try to eat in a better way. Those who do not understand continue with their bad old habits. In his infinite wisdom Allah has imposed upon all Muslims that they should fast for 29 or 30 days during the year. Since Allah is wisdom personified whatever He has prescribed for us should be for our own good whether we understand it or not. And it is fair to

say that that most Muslims do respond to this directive from Allah and they do their best to fast during the month of Ramadan.

Let us talk a bit about these benefits. Allah tells us that through fasting we will become more god-fearing and god-loving. That is to say by keeping fast we will open another vista of progress for our journey towards Allah. So when we fast we need to keep this objective in mind. If whilst fasting we are only thinking about how much we are going to eat and drink when we will break the fast we would be missing the point. Although the Holy Prophet Mohammad^{saw} has told us that the time of breaking the fast is one of great pleasure for the fasting person we should not just be thinking about that. Our objective is to increase the awareness of the presence of Allah in our daily life while going about our daily avocations. So one should be prepared and determined to close all those avenues which might incline one to sin. If a young man or a man might be tempted to look at women passing by, a young woman or a woman might be tempted to speak ill about someone else. For men the source of the sin will be the sense of sight and for the women the power of speech. So the men should try to walk with their eyes down and the women should try to control their tongue. I am talking generally. I am not pinpointing at anyone in particular. So while we are fasting and the occasion for sinning and diminishing our fear of Allah present itself we should be on the lookout and nip these temptations in the bud. If we practice this for four weeks and we understand how important such self control is for our spiritual well being, in the other days of the year we will continue practicing what we have known to be good during the month of Ramadan.

There are many men and women, young and old, married and unmarried who these days spend a lot of their time on the Internet or on their mobile phones. There are some people who work on their mobile phones and I am not talking about them. I am only talking about all those who spend their time corresponding with others and talking a lot of nonsense and doing nothing good. Mobile phones, the personal computer and the internet have an immense potential for doing good within society provided they are used as such. Today the possibility that is available for anyone to learn anything almost freely on the net is simply put mind boggling. But unfortunately most of the people are not using these opportunities. Many persons are using what the internet can offer to do what is bad for society and for themselves and their family. Many men are using the internet to see what is forbidden and to have forbidden relationship with other women. Similarly many women also are engaged in similar or slightly different activities and relationship. Ramadan will give everyone the opportunity to take stock of the situation and to ask whether what we are doing is the right thing to do as a Muslim. You cannot fast and at the same time go on chatting with someone with whom you are not supposed to be talking to. No one can change what happened in the past. But you can use the present, which is the month of Ramadan to repent of everything bad that you might have done in the past and stop all such activities that you know

in your heart of heart do not contribute to your fear or love of Allah. We who claim to be the inheritors of the teachings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} cannot and should not behave in the same way that others do. We are here to revive the teachings of Islam and we are confident that we can still practice Islam in the modern world without compromising our values, May we all use the opportunity of the month of Ramadan to renew our commitment to be sincere and loyal to the true teachings of Islam throughout our life.

There are many Muslims who do not wake up for namaz Fajr. If you have the opportunity of walking near mosques after Namaz Fajr you can easily guess how many Muslims really go for Namaz Fajr to the mosque. You will notice that usually it is a really meager number. However we may allow that double or triple that number may be waking up to pray at home. Even then the number would be still small. But in the month of Ramadan almost all Muslims have the opportunity to say not only Salat Fajr but all their five daily prayers on time although it might not necessarily be in the mosque. So Ramadan helps us to practice the other pillar of Islam, namely *salat* in a way that we do not do in the other days of the year. The motivation and the occasion to say all prayers as far as possible on time and in congregation are present and most Muslims do avail themselves of these opportunities.

In fact if we reflect well we will notice that the month of Ramadan is the period of the year when Muslims have the opportunity to practice the pillars of Islam in a most extraordinary way. To begin with we have been encouraged by the Holy Prophet Mohammad ^{saw} to repeat “*Laa ilaha illallaho*” a lot during the month of Ramadan. Then we have all the opportunities to do all our daily prayers on time and in congregation. Thirdly we fast during this month and most Muslims do pay their Zakaat also during this month. As far as the fifth pillar of Islam is concerned, namely the Hajj, Allah has specified some particular days for it to be celebrated. Therefore we see that Ramadan offers all of us to do our best to practice our religion in it. That is why it is the blessed month by the Grace of Allah. How ungrateful we would be to Allah if we do not rise to the occasion and do everything in our power to obey our Allah in a way that He is pleased with us during this month and ever after? May Allah help all Muslims to do what is needed to please Him. Ramadan Mobarack to all. May Allah give you plenty of opportunities to do good and to become a better Muslim. Ameen.

