

FRIDAY SERMON OF IMAM ZAFRULLAH DOMUN

12 AUGUST 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 members may notice the days of fasting are passing by quite quickly and today is the 11th day of fasting. I hope and pray that Allah alleviates your hunger and thirst and that all of you may enjoy your fast spiritually for the rest of the blessed month. Young people may not appreciate fully all the blessings of the month of Ramadan but as Rumi said “there is sweetness in this emptiness”, one has to try to find it out and I am sure that insha Allah for anyone who seeks Allah will grant this sweetness.

Prior to the month of Ramadan I was thinking that I will not quote the hadiths that we usually quote in my sermons this year and that I was going to tell a few other things about Ramadan. But from my conversation with our own people I have come to the conclusion that it would still be good to remind all the members about all the important hadiths about Ramadan because most people have forgotten them. So as Allah has rightly said “*Fa zakkir innaz zikra tafa'oul momeneen*” (87:10). which means “continue to remind because the act of reminding is beneficial to the believers” I have decided that I will again speak about those hadiths in which the Holy Prophet Mohammad^{saw} reminded us about the blessings of Ramadan and how we should fast. Members should try to remember them and act according to the instructions given.

We read from Bokhari the following Hadith:

Abu Hurayrah relates that Rasulullah Salla Allahu ta'ala 'alayhi wa Sallam said,

"My Ummah was given five things for Ramadan which were not given to anyone except them. For them, the smell from the mouth of a fasting person is sweeter to Allah than the fragrant smell of musk. On their behalf the fish in the sea seek forgiveness for the fasting persons until they break their fast. Allah prepares and decorates a special garden

in Jannah everyday and then says (to it), "The time is near when faithful servants shall cast aside the great trials of the world and come to you". In this month (for them) evil-minded Shaytaan is chained so as not to reach unto those evils to which they normally reach during other months besides Ramadan. On the last night of Ramadan they are forgiven". The Sahaabah (Radiallahu anhum) there upon enquired, "O Messenger of Allah is that last night Laylatul Qadr? The Prophet ^{saw} replied, "No. But it is only right that a servant should be given his reward on having completed his service."

The distinction given to those people who have accepted and who follow the Holy Prophet saw are many but there are five which are quite particular to the month of Ramadan. The first one is that as a result of fasting especially because we are not taking any food there is a foul smell that comes from the mouth of the fasting person. Since our fasting is due to our obedience to Allah's instructions, Allah has shown an appreciation for this bad smell. To all of us this might be a discomfort. But Allah tells us through His Prophet that to Him this bad "smell is sweeter than musk". However this does not mean that we should not wash our mouth as often as we can especially when we perform ablution in order to dispel the odor from our mouth. If this smell is appreciated by Allah it does not mean that we should impose it upon our fellow human beings. Under no circumstance should we use toothpaste to dispel it. But we can still brush our teeth lightly whenever we feel like.

The next distinction is that fishes in the ocean seek forgiveness for the fasting person until he or she breaks the fast. One might think that this might be an exaggeration. But we will say that the holy prophet has only wished to inform us about how much forgiveness for our sins are possible for us when we observe the fast of Ramadan. Since we all know that there is an innumerable number of fish in the sea, we can easily imagine the amount of pardon that Allah wishes to give us because of fasting. It would be foolish on the part of the believer that he does not make the best of this opportunity.

The third distinction we are told is that everyday a table is prepared in heaven for the fasting believers. Again this shows the love of Allah for His creatures and He tells them what He has in store for them.

The fourth distinction is that Satan is chained so that it might not do all the havoc that it usually does in other months. When we reflect about this hadith we are bound to admit that during the month of Ramadan there is a disinclination to commit sins even minor ones that we indulge in during the other months of the year. For example many believers do watch any film either on video or on Tv or on the computer during Ramadan. In some houses we know that everybody understands that out of respect for the Holy month all members of the household do not watch any type of films. For about thirty days during the year the majority of Muslims stay away from the type of amusement that television provides. Besides there are many other forbidden things that we care not to indulge in while we are fasting. For example we do not engage into discussion about minor matters. This usually takes place between husband and wife. But during the month of Ramadan we see less of it. In another hadith the Holy Prophet is reported to have said "When Ramadan comes, the gates of the Garden are opened, the gates of the Fire are closed and the Satans are chained up." In other words during this month there is a tendency to multiply the good deeds and to avoid totally or to keep to a minimum any bad deeds. Man then prepares himself to do the bidding of his Lord. No such opportunity is available in the other months of the year.

The fifth distinction which the Holy Prophet mentions is that the fasting person is forgiven his sins on the last day. Now we will be forgiven our sins only if we have toiled for this forgiveness while we were fasting and we acted according to the established rules of the sunna of the Holy prophet Mohammad^{saw}. So these are the five distinctions that Allah has reserved for the fasting people of the Umma of the Holy Prophet^{saw}. This distinction has not been given to any other community. So we should remember this hadith, reflect upon it and talk to it with our friends and discuss it so that we may delve deep into its meanings.

Ramadan is the moment when we seek Allah more than we usually do. In another hadith the Holy Prophet^{saw} is reported to have said: 'Every action of the son of Adam is for himself except for fasting. It is Mine and I repay it.' Fasting is a shield. When someone is fasting, he should not have sexual relations nor quarrel. If someone fights him or insults him, he should say, 'I am fasting'. By the One in whose hand the self of

Muhammad is, the changed breath in the mouth of the faster is more fragrant to Allah than the scent of musk. The faster experiences two joys: when he breaks his fast he rejoices and when he meets his Lord he rejoices in his fasting." So Allah has made it clear for us that this action of fasting is exclusively done for Him and no one else. When we practice other virtues our actions may be tainted with some pride or some hypocrisy. But this is not at all the case with fasting. The three main things from which we have been asked to abstain, namely food drink and sex are such that there cannot be half measures in them. We cannot say we will partake of a little of them and we could have partaken without other people's knowledge. We can eat or drink something in the privacy of our room. But we do not do it although we might feel the urge. We do not do it because we think or feel that if we transgressed we would be punished. And we do this only because there is a fear of Allah in our heart. Fasting has been prescribed for us so that this fear of Allah that prevents us from taking any food or drink may become greater and greater in the daily course of our existence. When we do like that definitely the doors of all blessings will be opened to us because we will become Allah's and He will be Ours. What can we ask for more?

In this hadith the Holy Prophet says that fasting is a shield. It protects us from sinning. Because we are fasting we are in a better position to repel the attacks of Satan. So when we fast we should not quarrel with anyone even if he or she wants to quarrel with us. We should tell the person who might insult or wants to quarrel with us "*Inni saa'emoune*" meaning "I am fasting". This is how we cultivate patience because Ramadan is the month of patience as the Holy Prophet has told us. The rest of the hadith needs no comment right now because I have already spoken about it.

In another hadith the Holy Prophet has told us "Allah does not require someone who does not abandon lies, and acting by them, while fasting to abandon his food and drink". From this we understand clearly how important it is for us not to continue to feel hunger and thirst for nothing. If we do not abandon all the prohibitions of Allah we are fasting in vain. So we should be very careful with our words and our deeds. If we fast let us fast with a view to get Taqwa by feeling thirst and hunger. But we should also see to it that we do not feel the thirst and hunger in vain by doing anything which is prohibited.

Sometimes it happens that a fasting person eats or drinks something inadvertently. In such circumstance one should not break the fast because the Holy Prophet has told us that "If someone forgets, and eats and drinks, he should complete his fast. Allah has fed him and let him drink." This appears to be a favour from Allah and I am sure everyone has experienced such moments.

Muslims are quite generous during the month of Ramadan. They give as much as they can in charity to relieve the sufferings of others. That is why Sadaqatoul Fitr has been prescribed. This sort of levy is imposed on all Muslims, even a newborn one who is born just prior to Eid prayer. Usually it is four and a half pounds of what you usually eat per person. This contribution has to be made prior to salat Eid. I suggest that members pay for their contribution as early as possible so that we may distribute it among the needy incha Allah. From the hadiths we learn that the Holy Prophet^{saw} was very generous during the month of Ramadan. It is said that he was more generous in it than during the other months of the year. Ibn 'Abbas reports that "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the most generous of people, and he was even more generous during Ramadan when Jibril met him. Jibril used to meet him every night in Ramadan until it was over and the Prophet would go through the Qur'an with him. The Messenger of Allah was more generous with good things than the blowing wind."

Speaking about the generosity of Muslims amongst themselves the Holy Prophet^{saw} is reported to have said "Whoever gives a faster something with which to break his fast has the same reward without that diminishing the reward of the faster in any way." This hadith gives us a motivation to share with others something to break the fast. I may say that this practice is quite widespread amongst Muslims. In Port Louis for Iftar there are many small food shops which give Iftar freely.

To end I will say a few words about Iftar. These days there are plenty of food for iftar. There is nothing bad in this provided we do not go over the limits. We learn from the hadiths that the Holy Prophet^{saw} used to break his fast with dates. When there were no dates he drank few sips of water. May Allah give to all of us the wisdom to fast to win His Pleasure. Ameen