

FRIDAY SERMON OF IMAM ZAFRULLAH DOMUN

13 JULY 2012

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

We understand that the Ramadan moon will be born on Thursday 19th July around 08h34 for Mauritius. This means that it will not be visible on the same day after sunset because less than twenty hours would not have elapsed. Hence it is most probable that the new moon would be visible in Mauritius on Friday 20th July and we will start fasting on Saturday next. Therefore all those on whom this fasting is obligatory should start preparing themselves mentally to observe it. May Allah give to every Muslim the opportunity and capacity to observe Allah's commandments in the best possible way and may He open the doors of His mercy for all of us.

As a Muslim we are bound to follow all the commandments that Allah has prescribed for us in the Holy Quran throughout the year. Fasting has been prescribed for only one month out of twelve months. But five daily prayers should be done every day. No Muslim can neglect his prayers. In fact if someone does not pray daily as prescribed it is as if he has not believed in the message brought down by the Holy Prophet Mohammad^{saw}. Thus neglecting ones prayers is a great sin. It is no wonder then that we see people neglecting their prayers and indulging in all sorts of sins. Allah has prescribed prayers for us and these prayers have the capacity to protect us from sinning. Allah says in the Holy Quran "Observe Prayer for it prohibits evil and vice" [29:45]. Now if one prays and continue to sin, it would mean that his prayers are not being done properly. We should not just pray with a neglectful mind. We should pray as if Allah is in front of us. If we do not have enough concentration to feel His Presence we should remember that He is seeing us. This is not a state of mind that we can achieve overnight. It needs plenty of years of practice to achieve a state when you stand up for prayer you almost completely forget the world and concentrate thoroughly on Allah. This is the objective to be achieved by all Muslims. But how many are engaged in achieving this state. Only Allah knows.

My point is that as a Muslim we need to perfect the way we pray in order to achieve the essence of prayer. It is quite unfortunate that many Muslims are neglectful of their prayers in the other days of the year but they try their best to do all of them during the month of Ramadan. There is no denying the fact we cannot fast without observing our prayers. Both are obligatory upon all of us. But we should realize that we disqualify ourselves as a Muslim if we intentionally miss

even one prayer. Besides we should also realize that there is more to prayer than just going through the different postures that we usually take during its performance. We should aim for prayer of the soul rather than just bodily postures. Speaking about true worship of Allah Hazrat Masih Maood^{as} says:

“Man claims to worship God, but worship does not consist of a lot of prostrations and bowing and standing, or rotating the beads of a rosary countless times. Worship means to be so drawn to God, out of love for Him, that one’s ego should disappear altogether. First, there should be firm faith in the existence of God and a full appreciation of His Beauty and Beneficence. Then there should be such love of God that the heart should ever feel its flame and this condition should be manifest all the time from one’s countenance. God’s greatness should so inspire the heart that the whole world should appear dead in comparison. His being should be the source of all fear. Pain endured for Him should be all joy, His company should be a source of delight, and the heart should find no comfort with anyone other than Him. To reach such a condition is termed ‘worship’; but it is not reached without the special help of God Almighty. That is why He has taught us the prayer: *“Iyyaka na’bodo wa iyyaka nastaeen”*. That is, we do worship Thee, but how can we do justice to Thy worship until we receive Thy special help? To worship God, having made Him one’s True Beloved, is the essence of sainthood, which is the height of spiritual progress, but this cannot be achieved without His help. The indication of having achieved it is that God’s greatness and love should be established in the heart and the heart should rely completely on Him and love Him alone. And he should prefer Him to everything and make His remembrance the purpose of his life. Such a person would be ready to carry out with the eagerness of love the most testing commands of God, even if, like Abraham^{as}, he is commanded to slaughter his own son or to jump into the fire. He will leave no stone unturned in obedience to God and in his eagerness to win His pleasure. This door is very narrow and this drink is very bitter. There are few who enter this door and drink of this bitter cup. It is no great thing to refrain from adultery or killing a person unlawfully; nor is it a great achievement to refrain from bearing false witness. But to prefer God to everything and to welcome every bitterness with true eagerness and out of true love for Him, and to create bitterness for oneself in this path, is a status which cannot be achieved by anyone except the truthful.

This is the worship which is prescribed for man. When a person performs this worship, God responds to it with something which is called His bounty; as we are

taught in the Holy Qur'an: "*Ihdenas siratal moustaqeem siratallazina an'amta alayhim*"

O Allah, guide us along Thy straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favour and have singularized them with Thy special Grace." (Essence of Islam V5 P 175-6)

Now should someone examine his own worship with this description that Hazrat Masih Maood^{as} has given us, he or she would easily realize that his or her worship of Allah falls quite short of the true worship that is expected. Maybe because Allah knows quite well that His servants have many shortcomings that he sends us Ramadan once every year so that we may make up for whatever we have missed and that we may be motivated to present the true worship to Allah in the rest of the days that have been determined for us to live. Allah knows best. But we all know that with the coming of the month of Ramadan we are given a new opportunity to do better every year. So if we want to be a better practicing Muslim we should avail ourselves of the opportunity that is being given to us in Ramadan to improve our relationship with Allah through a drastic improvement in the way we pray.

In another extract from the Promised Messiah we read:

"Those who say that they do not care for the Promised Messiah, in fact, do not care for their own faith, salvation, and purity. If they had any sense of justice and were to analyse their own inner condition, they would realize that, without the renewed certainty of faith which descends from heaven through the Messengers and Prophets of God, their prayers are but a ritual and their fasting mere starvation. The fact is that no one can attain true deliverance from sin, nor can one truly love God or fear Him, as He deserves to be feared, until one attains true knowledge and strength through God's own grace and mercy. It is evident that true knowledge is the basis of all fear and love and it is only after one has gained knowledge and recognition of a thing that love, desire, fear or aversion for that particular thing takes root in one's heart. It is of course true that one cannot attain true knowledge until God grants it, and it cannot benefit anyone except through God's grace. This knowledge then opens the door of seeking and recognizing the truth. It is only through repeated acts of Divine grace that this door remains open and is not shut thereafter. Spiritual knowledge, in short, can only be attained through Divine grace, and through it alone can it survive. Divine grace purifies and illuminates knowledge, removes the intervening veils and cleanses the *Nafs-e-Ammarah* of all its impurities. It bestows strength and life upon the soul and releases the baser self

from the prison of sin and purges it of its evil passions. Also, this grace salvages one from the flood of carnal passions and a kind of transformation takes place in man and he develops a natural aversion for sin. Thereafter, the very first urge felt by the soul, through God's grace, is called *du'a* [supplication]..."

Speaking about this supplication Hazrat Masih says:

Do not think that we already pray everyday, and that the *Salat* we offer is also prayer; for the prayer which follows true knowledge and is born of Divine grace is of an altogether different colour and complexion. Such prayer is a thing that consumes, it is a fire that melts, it is a magnetic force that draws Divine mercy, it is a death but ultimately gives life, it is a raging flood but finally turns into a boat. Through it every wrong is redressed and every poison finally becomes an antidote. Blessed are the prisoners who never tire of supplication, for they shall one day be freed. Blessed are the blind who are not listless in their prayers, for they shall one day see. Blessed are those lying in graves who supplicate to God for help and succour, for one day they shall be taken out of their graves. Blessed are you who never tire of supplication, your soul melts in prayer, your eyes shed tears, and a fire kindles in your breast which takes you to dark closets and wildernesses so that you may taste solitude and drives you to restlessness and near madness, for you shall finally receive Divine bounties...

You too should be faithful and pray with all sincerity and faith so that He may bestow His mercy on you. Dissociate yourselves from the commotion of the world and do not give religious complexion to your egoistic disputes. Accept defeat for the sake of God so that you may become heirs to great victories. God will show miracles to those who supplicate and those who ask will be blessed with extraordinary grace. Prayer comes from God and to Him it returns. Through prayer God becomes as close to you as your very life.

The first blessing of prayer is that it brings about a holy change in a person, as a consequence of which God also brings about a transformation in His attributes.

His attributes are indeed immutable, but for such a transformed person He shows a different manifestation of which the world knows nothing. It would seem as if He had become another God, whereas, in fact, there is no other God. The truth is that it is a new manifestation of His which portrays Him in an altogether different light. It is then that God, in honour of this special manifestation, does for the transformed one what He does not do for others. These are what are known as miracles."

He continues :

In short, prayer is the elixir which turns a handful of dust into pure gold. It is water which washes away inner impurities. With such prayer the spirit melts and flows like water to fall prostrate on the threshold of the Holy One. It stands in the presence of God, bows down and prostrates before Him. The *Salat* taught by Islam is only its reflection. The standing of the spirit signifies that it shows readiness to suffer every hardship and to obey every command for the sake of God. The bowing down of the spirit before God means that, by renouncing all other love and relationships, it has turned to God and belongs to Him alone. Its prostration is that it falls on the threshold of God and, forsaking all personal thoughts, loses the very identity of its existence. This is the prayer which helps to establish communion with God, and this is the prayer that Islamic Shariah has depicted in the prescribed daily *Salat* so that physical prayer may inspire spiritual prayer. God Almighty has fashioned man in such a way that the spirit influences the body and the body in turn influences the spirit. When the spirit is melancholy, the eyes shed tears; and when the spirit is glad, the face glows with happiness and one even feels like laughing.” (Lecture Sialkot p33-35)

I have chosen these extracts in order help the readers to get an understanding upon what type of prayers they have been called upon to present before Allah. The month of Ramadan is the ideal time to start or to improve the standard of your prayers. May Allah help each one amongst us to progress on the path towards Him.