

FRIDAY SERMON OF IMAM ZAFRULLAH DOMUN

09 NOVEMBER 2012

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

The history of Islam is full of examples of people who understood the message of Islam and did their best to mould their life according to the noble teachings that they received. Some of the companions of the prophet have left for us examples that cannot be rivaled or excelled. It is the duty of each one amongst us to be aware of the life history of these noble companions. They serve as beacons of light for all the generations that came after them. Today I have chosen to speak about a companion who is not well known because his story has not been recounted in speeches quite often. I first heard of this story when my friend Dr Mahmood Sooltangos spoke about it in one of our meetings. Since then I decided that one day I will have to make a sermon on that noble soul.

His name was Umair Ibn Saad al Ansari. I take this story from a book known as *Al hilyatul Awliyaa wa tabaqatul Asfiyaa* written by Imam Al Hafiz Abu Naim al Asfahani (948-1038) which was translated into English by Sheikh Muhammad al Akili. It is a long story. I will summarize it in some places and make some comments as we go along. He was known among the Muslims as the "Matchless". His father participated in the battle of Badr and later died in the battle of Qadisiyya. From the moment his father brought him to the Holy Prophet <sup>saw</sup> to make *bait* he devoted his life to Allah. While he was still young he once heard Julaas Ibn Suwaid Ibn As-Saamit, one of his close relatives, saying, "If the man is truthful, then we're more evil than mules!" He meant by "the man" the Prophet <sup>saw</sup>. Julaas was one of those who embraced Islam out of fear. When 'Umair heard that statement, his calm quiet spirit burst into anger and confusion. Anger because one of those who pretended to be a Muslim had insulted the Prophet by this wicked language. Umair immediately behaved like a strong man and a pious believer. He turned to Julaas Ibn Suwaid and said: "O Julaas, by Allah, you're one of the most beloved to myself and the last one I would like to see afflicted by something he dislikes. You've now said something that if I spread it around, it would harm you; if I keep

silent, I would ruin my religion, and the fulfillment of duty towards religion has priority. So I'm going to inform the Messenger of Allah what you've said!" Unfortunately Julaas did not present any apology for what he said. So Umair left him saying, "I will inform the Prophet <sup>saw</sup> before a revelation makes me a partner of your sin." So he informed the Holy Prophet about this matter. But Julaas insisted that he had not said so. So immediately the following verse was revealed:

"They swear by GOD that they said nothing, but they indeed uttered the word of unbelief, and disbelieved after they had become Muslims, and they intended a plot but could not accomplish what they intended and they only showed hostility towards Islam after GOD and His Messenger had enriched them out of His Bounty, so if they repent it will be better for them, so if they turn away, GOD will chastise them with a painful chastisement in this world and the Hereafter, and on earth there will be none to protect or help them" (9 : 74).

On hearing the verse Julaas had to confess and apologize to the Holy Prophet <sup>saw</sup> The Prophet <sup>saw</sup> held his ear and praised him, "O my boy! Your ear was loyal and your Lord believed you." This incident gives us an idea of the character of Umair while he was still young.

So Hazrat Umar <sup>ra</sup> needed someone to be the governor of Homs in Syria. This is the same place that we have heard much about these days because of the conflict in Syria. Umair went over there and for about one year he did not report anything to the caliph in Medina. So the caliph Umar wrote to him and summoned him to come back to Medina. He also asked Umair to bring back all the dues concerning taxes and alms that he collected and distributed among the people of Homs.

Once he received the letter from the caliph Umair gathered his meager belongings which consisted of a haversack, a small cooking pot, and a few personal tools which he wrapped in a piece of cloth. Umair then prepared some food for the journey and he roped his goat and left Homs on foot, dragging the goat behind him, and he walked until he entered the city of Medina weeks later.

When he arrived at Medina Umair had lost weight, his face was pale and dirty, his hair long and he was covered from head to toe with the dust of the journey. Upon entering the city of Medina he went immediately to the caliph's house and greeted him reverently.

When Umar looked up and saw Umair's condition, he looked at him with obvious shock and said: "What happened to you?" Umair replied: "What wrong do you see happened to me! Do you not see me standing up with a healthy body, my blood renewed and pure from the

journey, and here I am in your presence, having walked all this distance, dragging the world by its horn behind me?"

Umair is in the presence of the caliph yet he shows no sign of fear to speak his mind. He is afraid of only Allah and he does not care at all for the rest. Immediately the caliph asks him "What are you carrying with you?" Umair replied "I am carrying my haversack, wherein I placed my food, a pot which I sometimes use to cook my food and to wash my head and clothes, besides a special pouch for my personal tools I use for my ritual ablution and for drinking, and furthermore, I brought my goat, which I sometimes leaned on, and at other times, it was useful to counter or scare an enemy. Let Allah be my witness that the whole world is of no importance after that."

Umar asked: "Did you come back walking on foot?". Umair replied "I did" Umar further asked: "Was there no one to donate an animal for you to ride on this arduous long journey?" Umair replied: "They neither offered me anything, nor did I ask anyone for anything." Umar then commented: "Most inauspicious are such Muslims you have left behind you." Umair replied: "O Umar! You must fear Allah! You know well that Allah forbade you to backbite others. Let me clarify here that when I last saw them they were engaged in *Dhuha*, mid morning supererogatory prayers and to this I bear witness." Just note how fearless this man is that he even reprimands the caliph and tells him where he was going against the Book of Allah!

Umar further asked: "How much alms tax have you collected? And would you report to me about the state of affairs you were sent to conduct?" Umair replied: "O Commander of the faithful, please enunciate your question clearly. What do you mean? Omar exclaimed: "Glory be to Allah the All knowing Lord!" Umair then said: "I was afraid to tell you the news lest it should depress you. However I must report to you since you sent me to that town to govern. There I gathered all its virtuous inhabitants and made them in charge of levying the taxes, so when they did that I put the money there where it belongs. If anything had remained I would have sent it to you."

Umar said "Didn't you bring us anything?". Umair replied "No.". Umar pondered for a moment and he then turned to his immediate circle and said: "Renew for Umair his contract of employment." Hearing that Umair became upset and said: "That's something different! I expressly refuse to work for you or anyone after you from this day on. O Omar I thought that you will be on my side! Is this humiliation you brought me in public the best of what you can

offer as a reward for my services? Surely the worst of my days are those which I had to share this government with you.” Sometimes one may wonder if good people are always requited like this by those in authority and who bear the title of caliph.

Umair asked leave and on foot went back to his house which was situated at a distance of several miles outside of Medina.

That was not the end. Umar still thought that Umair had betrayed him. He sent someone to Umair with 100 dinars. He told him to pretend to stay as a guest at his place. He asked him to report back if he found anything unusual. But if he found that Umair was in dire need he should give him that money. So this man whose name was Harith came to Umair and he invited him to stay with him as a guest. He stayed with him for three nights. Umair and his wife went without food but they gave food to Harith. On the third day Umair told his guest: “You have made us hungry. If it agrees with you to take leave and return to your home, then please do so.”

Immediately Harith gave him the 100 dinars with the compliments of the caliph. At first Umair refused it. But his wife told him to take it and to use or place it where it should be. He said he did not even have a pouch to keep it. His wife tore a piece from her garment and gave it to him. He took the money and went to distribute it among the poor of a nearby village.

When Harith reported back to the caliph he told him that he had seen Umair living in very austere conditions and that he did not know what Umair had done with the money that was given to him. Umar sent another missive to Umair and summoned him to his office immediately.

When he arrived the caliph asked him what he had done with the money. Umair said: “I did with it whatever I did. Why do you have to ask?” Feeling remorse, Umar appealed with tears in his eyes: “I implore you earnestly to tell me about what did you do with the money?” Umair replied: “I offered it in charity for my personal benefit in the hereafter.” Umar commented: “Indeed Allah has shown you the way to receiving His Mercy.”

Immediately the caliph Umar ordered that a parcel containing a generous measure of food to be prepared and two new garments be given to Umair. When they were brought in Umair said: “As for the food, I truly have no need for it, for I have left two measure of wheat barley, and until they are consumed, I am confident that Allah, blessed be His Name, will provide the needed provisions for what will come next. However, as for the garments, I will take them.” He then went back to his house.

After sometime Umair died. When Umar heard the news, he felt for him and prayed for Allah's Mercy to encompass him. That day Umar walked along with few of his companions to the *Baqi* cemetery to visit Umair's grave. On their way Umar<sup>Ra</sup> said: "Let each one of you make a wish." Someone said: "O commander of the believers, I wish that I had the needed money to free such and such number of slaves from bondage for Allah's pleasure." Another man said: "O commander of the believers, I wish that I had a large sum of money to spend in charity for Allah's pleasure. A third person said: "I wish I had the physical strength to stand by the well of Zam-zam and to draw out the needed water to quench the thirst of all the pilgrims who visit the House of Allah." Umar, May God be pleased with him then prayed: "I wish that I had another man such as Umair ibn Sa'ad to help me serve the needs of the Muslims."

In this story there are plenty of lessons for all of us. On the one hand we see the fearless, God-fearing, generous, selfless Umair bin Sa'ad as a person who fulfills his duties with only Allah in mind. On the other hand we find a caliph who feels himself accountable for what was under his responsibility. We see also that these early Muslims were not afraid to tell even a caliph of the caliber of Hazrat Umar what they thought. Let us hope and pray that Allah grants us the opportunity to walk in the path of these noble souls. Amen