

FRIDAY SERMON

12 July 2013

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran Imam Zafrullah Domun read verses 184-5 of chapter *Al Baqara* and then he said:

As you are all aware these two verses that I have just read are those that enjoin upon all Muslims to fast during the month of Ramadan. Their translations are as follows: “O ye who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you might become righteous. *The prescribed fasting is* for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey *shall fast* the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast *only* with great difficulty is an expiation — the feeding of a poor man. And whoso performs a good work with willing obedience, it is better for him. And fasting is good for you, if you only knew. ”(2:184-5)

Anyone who delivers Friday sermons in mosques throughout the world assumes the role of a preacher. His task is to remind the congregationists about their religious duties as far as possible. Very often the preacher has to talk about matters that he spoke about previously. The month of Ramadan comes every year and hence we have to remind the members how they should live the hours of Ramadan to win the pleasure of Allah. Hence whatever we speak about in the month of Ramadan are more or less repeated every year. We cannot invent anything else. Yes, if there is a new problem that calls for attention we should address such a problem and make the people aware of how they should deal with it. But such problems are quite rare. Hence we cannot do without this repetition. Besides, this repetition is not necessarily boring. It just helps to remind us of many important matters that we might have forgotten. So we should attend Jummah in the month of Ramadan with a view to be reminded of the important teachings concerning Ramadan.

Fasting is to refrain from food and drink and sex during the day and to perform voluntary prayers during the night. This is how the early Muslims practiced it and this is how we are supposed to practice it in our own time. From history books we understand that the early Muslims went on jihad even whilst they were fasting. Fortunately for us in many parts of the world such is not the case. But for those who are in the armed forces in Muslim or non Muslim countries that might be the case. Allah's instructions concerning fast applied to the early Muslims and to all Muslims to come till the end of the world. Hence we see that anyone who calls himself a Muslim has to carry out the same instructions that early Muslims carried. Hence the fact that during each Ramadan we do almost the same things and in sermons we hear more or less the same things.

But as a person ages the essence of his worship cannot be the same. If it were so it would mean that such a person is incapable of learning and incapable of improving himself. When we are a child we behave in a certain way but when we become an adult we have to behave in a different

way after we have abandoned our infantile behaviors. So should it be with our *namaz* and our fasts. When we were a child we fasted and we endured the pangs of hunger and thirst with a view on the feast at *iftar* time. But when we become an adult we should be happy to break our fast at *iftar* time but throughout the day we should engage ourselves in behaviors with a view to cultivating an increase in Allah's fear in our heart. As an adult the *iftar* time is not that important. What is important is how best do we fast with a view to getting Allah's nearness. What is important is how far we use our fast to try to understand the real purpose of our life and strive to implement the same in our life. If you reflect about this aspect of fasting you will note that many fail on this score. Sometimes we are unable to control our gaze as we should and we allow our fast not to break but at least to crack. If there are too many cracks it may break. Hence we have to be careful. If men may crack their fasts through their eyes, women are not immune. They might crack their fast through their tongues by saying unpleasant and unnecessary words by engaging in idle talks. So both sexes should be quite conscious of the demands of the fast and not take it as a light matter.

As I said in my last sermon, Allah out of His Mercy sends us this month of Ramadan to manifest His mercy upon all of us. We partake of His Mercy when we do our best to fast in a way that pleases Him. If the Holy Prophet (saw) has told us that we should not respond to the person who wants to pick a quarrel with us whilst we are fasting by telling him that we are fasting, we should show such a behaviour in our own life. This is not just a hadith that needs to be practiced by others. It is a hadith that we should start practicing ourselves. We should do our best by not quarreling with anyone. It is only then that we can say that we understand the *raison d'etre* of our fast and we are trying to fulfill it.

Similarly the Holy Prophet (saw) has told us that at night during Ramadan we should pray. The words used in the hadith is "*qiyam al lail*", meaning standing up praying at night. The idea is that during the day we go without food and drink and sex but at night it is recommended that we should stand up praying. In the *umma* this has been understood to mean the *Tarawih* prayers. Definitely we should participate in the *Tarawih* prayers if we can and we should do our best to understand the verses of the Holy Quran that the Imam reads. Definitely the aim of these additional prayers are not for quick bodily exercises. The aim is for the people to listen and understand the verses of the Holy Quran. Just listening without understanding may bring some unknown benefits but it surely, according to me, does not meet the objectives for which it was meant in the first place. The idea is that people should know as much as they can the message of the Holy Quran. Hence there is a need for each one amongst us to know more of the Arabic language and deepen our knowledge of the Holy Quran. If we cannot do that we should at least find the time to read the Holy Book so that we might at least read it once during the month of Ramadan as Hazrat Jibril used to make the Holy Prophet recite during the month of Ramadan. Today the translation of the Holy Quran is available in many languages. We should take the time and strive to read at least one part everyday during Ramadan and finish the whole Quran in thirty days. If we do so we will understand more of the Holy Book as time goes on. There is nothing that will keep our faith alive as the reading of the Holy Book. You should try it and then you will experience what I am saying.

Sometimes some people do not know what to do during the free time that they have during

Ramadan. The Holy Prophet (saw), in a famous hadith has said: “you should display four characteristics to a great extent; with two of which you will please your Lord, and two you cannot dispense with. The two with which you will please your Lord are to testify that there is no one deserving of worship except Allah, and to seek His forgiveness; whereas the two which you cannot dispense with are that you beseech Allah to place you in Paradise and that you seek refuge with Him from Hell.” [Related by Ibn Khuzaymah and Al-Bayhaqi]. So we should engage ourselves in these *Zikr* if we ever have some free time. First we should keep reciting “*Laa ilaha Illallah*”. We should take some time and reflect upon these words. The Holy Prophet(saw) has told us in another hadith that these words burn sins as fire burns dry twigs. A great Sufi has gone so far as saying that the repetition of these words will lead one to the realization of Allah. So with perseverance we should engage ourselves in the repetition of “*Laa ilaha Illallah*” and realize its importance. Similarly the saying of “*astaghfirullah*” meaning “I seek forgiveness from Allah” should lead us to a total forgiveness of all our sins. We should feel ashamed of all the wrongs that we might have done in our life and ask Allah to forgive them all. The recitation of “*Laa ilaha Illallah*” and “*astaghfirullah*” will please our Lord according to what the Holy Prophet (saw) has said. But the two other prayers are such that we cannot dispense with them. In other words the Muslim should cultivate the habit of asking Allah to admit him or her in Paradise and to protect him or her from hell because it is such a dreadful place.

So let us all pass the following days of Ramadan with a heart full of thankfulness to Allah that He has kept us alive to be able to carry out all the devotions of the month of Ramadan once again in our life. We cannot will such moments to happen. It is Allah through His Grace that bring them about. We should only respond with humility and thankfulness. Since we can best express these thankfulness in our prayers let us hear once again from Hazrat Masih Maood (as) what he says about prayer. He says:

“Prayer is a wonderful thing. It is a pity that those who pray are not aware of the true manner of prayer, nor are they acquainted with the ways of the acceptance of prayer. The truth is that the very reality of prayer has become strange. There are some who deny the effectiveness of prayer altogether. There are others who do not deny it, but as their prayers are not accepted on account of their lack of knowledge of the manner of prayer and are not prayers in the true sense, their condition is worse than that of those who deny the effectiveness of prayer. Their practical condition has pushed many others to the verge of atheism. The first condition for prayer is that a supplicant should not get tired and become a prey to despair that nothing will happen. Sometimes it is seen that a prayer is carried on till it is about to be accepted and then the supplicant gets tired and the result is failure and frustration. Frustration results in the denial and effectiveness of prayer and gradually culminates in the denial of God. It is said if there is God Who accepts prayer why have not those prayers been accepted which were offered over a long period? If those who think thus and stumble were to reflect upon their lack of perseverance, they would come to know that all their frustration is the result of their own haste and impatience which generated an ill concept of the powers of God and resulted in despair. So one should never get tired.

Praying is like the sowing of a seed by a farmer. Apparently he buries the good seed in the soil and who can expect at that time that the grain of seed will grow up in the form of a good tree and bear fruit? Outsiders and even the cultivator himself cannot see that the grain is assuming the form of a plant inside the earth. But the reality is that within a few days the grain undergoes a change and begins to assume the shape of a plant till its shoot emerges from the earth and becomes visible to everyone. From the moment when the grain was placed in the earth it had started its preparation to become a plant, but an eye that can only perceive the visible was not aware of it till its shoot emerged from the earth and became visible. An ignorant child cannot understand at that stage that it will bear fruit only at its due time. He desires to see it bearing fruit immediately, but an intelligent cultivator will know what is the time for it to bear fruit. He looks after it steadfastly and nurtures it till the time comes when it bears fruit and which also ripens. The same is the case with prayer, which is nurtured in the same way and brings forth fruit. Those who are in haste get tired quickly and give up, and those who are steadfast persevere and arrive at their objective. It is true that there are many stages in prayer, ignorance of which deprives the supplicants of the fruits of their prayers. They are in a hurry and cannot wait, whereas there is progression in the works of the Almighty.”

So let us understand this true philosophy of prayer and let us offer such prayers during this Ramadan with the hope that Allah will accept them. We should use every minute to strive to come closer to Allah and He will show us signs of this proximity *incha* Allah. May Allah make this Ramadan Mubarak for all of us and for all Muslims as well.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

We have the pleasure to inform all members that our niece Khawla Lutf un nisa , daughter of Mobashir & Hanisha Domun has passed her Bsc (with honors) in Agriculture -specialisation in Aquaculture. May Allah make her success a source of blessings for her, for her family and for the Jamaat as well. We say to her and her parents “*Baarakallahho lakoum*”.