

FRIDAY SERMON

26 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 verse 187 of chapter *Al Baqara* and then he said:

Today is the 17th day of fasting. *Incha Allah* in less than 72 hours we will be entering the last ten days of this blessed month of Ramadan. For some people the time has come to relax our efforts. But for those who strive to follow the example of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw), now comes the time when we should be redoubling our efforts to make the most of all the blessings that we may get from this month. You will recall that we learn from the hadiths that when the last ten days of Ramadan arrived, the Holy Prophet(saw) used to redouble his efforts for the worship of Allah. Some hadiths even report that during these last days the Holy prophet(saw) did not sleep at all or slept very little at night and he used to wake up members of his household for night prayers. By now the effect of fasting is taking its toll on our body. Because of lack of sleep, food and drink we are all feeling some weakness in the body. But this should not allow us to relax our efforts. We should strive to do as the Holy Prophet(saw) did even if we would not be as successful as he was. May Allah grant each one amongst us the perseverance and patience needed to fast and to pray as much as we can in the coming days till the end. May Allah protect all of us from bodily weakness and from sleep and may He enable us to offer fasts and prayers that would be acceptable and pleasing to Him *incha Allah*.

When we speak about the last ten days we are also reminded of *Itekaaf*, that is seclusion in the mosque till the end of Ramadan for special devotion to Allah. By the Grace of Allah around the world plenty of Muslims will stay in their respective mosques during these final days of Ramadan. Even in Mauritius it appears that there are several old Muslims who make it a duty to stay in the mosque during the final days of Ramadan. As you might have read in the newspapers there were reports about someone who has been staying for *Itekaaf* since he was sixty years old and now he is in his nineties. Similarly I read about someone else who has been doing it for the last 25 years. Even in mainstream Jamaat Ahmadiyya there are some who have been practicing this spiritual retreat for some years. We appreciate such efforts and we pray that Allah appreciates the efforts that all these people are doing in His path and that He rewards them accordingly. Very often we also see that there are many young ones who stay in the mosque for *Itekaaf* during their School holidays. If they fulfill all the requirements of *Itekaaf* like for example not talking with one another, such stays in the mosque could become a very spiritually fulfilling experience for them. But if they go there just to while away their time then they would be a nuisance for those who want to observe *Itekaaf* with all its requirements. Young ones who are not mature enough to understand the importance of *Itekaaf* should not try to participate in it until they can fulfill its requirements.

Now, to come back to the verse which I read at the beginning, its translation is as follows
““And when My servants ask thee about Me, say: ‘I am near. I answer the prayer of the

supplicant when he prays to Me. So they should hearken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way.' ” (2:187). After speaking about the month of Ramadan Allah makes this declaration. He is near us when we call upon Him. In order to have more insight into this matter of prayer let us hear what Hazrat Masih Maood

(as) has to say about it. He says:

“To declare a Messenger of God as *Dajjal* is quite easy, but to enter the narrow gate of his teachings is an arduous task indeed. 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 analyze 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 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]. 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. The God to Whom I invite is very Gracious, Merciful, Modest, True, and Faithful. He bestows His mercy on the humble ones. 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.

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....”(Lecture Sialkot p31-33)

This text is quite important for all of us who want to progress in this path so that our prayers are not just words. But words which come from the heart and bring about changes in our own selves or in the world or just to fulfill the objects of our supplications. I suggest that you ponder on these words and understand how much you need to improve the standard of our prayers so that they might be truly named prayers.

Now for our fast not to be just starvation I have chosen an extract from the Masnavi where Maulana Rumi is speaking about the need for fasting which can foster a need for spiritual food or light. Commenting on the Holy Prophet's saying that his satan has become Muslim he says:

Although that (Light) is the food of the spirit and the (spiritual) sight, the body too partakes of it, O son.

If the devilish body had not become fond of eating it, the Prophet would not have said, "The devil accepted Islam."

290. How should the devil become a Moslem until it drink of the sweet food by which the dead is made living?

The devil is passionately in love with the world, blind and deaf; (but this) love, no doubt, may be cut off by another love.

When it tastes the wine from the cellar of clairvoyance, little by little it will transfer its love thither.

O thou whose belly is greedy, turn away thus (from the world): the only method is change of food.

O thou whose heart is sick, turn to the remedy: the entire regimen is change of disposition.

295. O thou who art kept in pawn to food, thou wilt escape if thou suffer thyself to be weaned.

Verily, in hunger there is plenteous food: search after it diligently and cherish the hope (of finding it), O shrinker.

Feed on the Light, be like the eye, be in accord with the angels, O best of mankind.

Like the Angel, make the glorification of God thy food, that like the angels thou mayst be delivered from vexation.

If Gabriel pays no attention to the carcass, (yet) how should he be inferior in strength to the vulture?

300. What a goodly table is spread in the world! But it is quite hidden from the eyes of the vile.

Though the world should become a delightful orchard, still the portion of the mouse and the snake would consist of earth.

Its (the vile creature's) food is earth, whether in winter or in spring; thou art the lord of creation: how is it thou eatest earth like the snake?

The wood-worm in the midst of wood says, "For whom (else) should be such fine sweetmeat?"

The dung-worm amidst (all) that pollution knows no dessert in the world but filth.

This extract is taken from Book 5 and the verses are marked. I hope the message is clear that being man, the best of creation, we should aim to feed on what is best. Although material food is necessary for our survival yet it is spiritual food that will solve all our problems. What is spiritual food? It is the remembrance of Allah as Allah says in the Holy Quran "*Alaa*

bezikrillahe tatmaenil Qoloob” Definitely it is Allah's remembrance that bring solace to the heart. So we fast in order to take the habit of weaning ourselves from physical food to concentrate on the spiritual one. May this Ramadan and all coming Ramadan help us to increase our intake of spiritual food in abundance *incha* Allah.