

FRIDAY SERMON

06 September 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 said:

Incha Allah today as well we will continue to speak about the Sura Al Fatiha. Each one amongst us needs to know and understand the importance of this great Sura and we should keep reflecting upon it whenever we read it in our prayers. In fact we need to internalize it and strive as far as we can to be among the group of people who have been favored by Allah. We should do our best not to find ourselves in the group of people who do not care about what Allah expects from them or who lead their lives in such a way that they have replaced the True God with other gods or who associate partners with Allah. Whilst we are on the journey it will happen that at times we might lose our way but under no circumstance should we forget our destination. In fact our destination is Allah and the journey we are speaking about is the path that we take to go to Him . In other words, we mean whatever we do in this very life to live our life according to the instructions that we have received in the Holy Qur'an and through the example of the Holy prophet Mohammad (saw). Everyone who struggles with his or her own self to become a better person day by day will notice how difficult the task is. At times it so happens that you have been struggling with a particular moral defect thinking that now you can control it and lo all of a sudden you succumb again to it. You have to start your struggle over again. But Allah appreciates our efforts. There are many verses in the Holy Quran and many sayings of the Holy Prophet (saw) which affirm this. Hence we should never relax in our efforts and keep struggling even if we lapse. Personally I think that reading the Sura al Fatiha and reflecting upon it will help a lot towards making each one amongst us a better human being.

Speaking about the highest form of worship Hazrat Masih Maood (as), the Promised Messiah says:

“The highest worship is constant watchfulness over the five daily Prayer services in the early portion of their timing and to endeavour with eager attention to derive the utmost blessing therefrom, through strict observance of obligatory and voluntary parts. For, Prayer (Salat) is a mount that carries the worshipper to the Lord of men, transporting him to a station he could not reach on the back of fast-running horses. The object of Prayer cannot be achieved with arrows, and its mystery cannot be unfolded by pens. Whoso makes this method obligatory on himself arrives at the truth and discovers the reality and meets the Friend Who is hidden behind the screens of invisibility and is delivered from doubt and uncertainty. His days become bright, his words shine like pearls, his face becomes refulgent like the full moon and his station is elevated. Whoso makes himself lowly before Allah in Prayer will find that God makes kings humble before him and makes such a slave a master.”

Speaking about the verse “ Thee alone do we worship and from thee alone do we seek help” Hazrat Masih says:

“This verse also conveys that it is not possible for a person to worship truly without the grant of strength from the Presence of the One, the only Lord. One of the elements of worship is that you should love your enemy as you love yourself and your children, and that you should overlook the faults of others and forbear and be good-hearted and pure-minded, upright and clean-living and loyal and virtuous, free from evil inclinations; and that you should be of service to mankind with a natural inclination like that of some vegetables, without formality and without affectation; and that you should not hurt your less fortunate brother with your arrogance, nor injure him with harsh words. It is obligatory on you to respond to your aggrieved brother with courtesy and never speak to him contemptuously. You should die before your death and count yourself among the dead. Honour your visitor even if he be dressed in tattered rags and not in gorgeous robes and new garments. Greet with the salutation of peace, both the acquaintance and the stranger and be ever ready to share the burdens of others”(*Ijazul Masih*, pp. 161-162)

Speaking about the need to strive, he further says:

“One who seeks through prayer and effort is a righteous person. As Allah, the Supreme, has pointed out in Sura *Fatiha*: We worship Thee alone and implore only Thy help. That one who does not seek with full understanding and intelligence and power, is not a seeker in the sight of God, and a person who tries God in this manner is ever frustrated. But if, along with his effort, he also supplicates God then God saves him, even if he should make a slip. But God cares not for one who comes to His door in self-assurance and sloth and thus tests God”(*Al-Badr*, Dec. 24, 1903).

“Those who depend on their own resources and disregard God, the Sublime, never come to a good end. This does not mean that doing nothing and sitting idle is reliance on God. Using one's resources and God-given capacities is appreciation of God's bounties. Those who do not make use of their capacities and proclaim their trust in God are liars. They do not truly appreciate God, the Sublime. They try the Supreme Lord and in effect treat their God-given powers and faculties as superfluous and irrelevant and are thus guilty of irreverence and impertinence towards Him. They ignore the significance of: We worship Thee; and without practising it, seek to enjoy the benefits of: We implore Thy help. This is most improper.

One must make use of one's resources as far as possible within the limits of one's capacities without relying on them as one's deities and source of beneficence. Instead having made proper use of them one must submit the matter with a thanksgiving prostration for the divine gift of faculties and capacities.”(*Al Hakam* 1905).

Iyyaka na'budu means: We adore thee, making use of all the resources and means

that thou hast granted us. If this tongue which is made up of veins and muscles had not been what it is we would not have been able to speak. He granted us a tongue that can express the thoughts of the mind. If we do not employ the tongue for prayer, it would be our misfortune. There are many ailments which could suspend all activity of the tongue, were any of them to afflict it, making one dumb. How wonderful then is the gift of the tongue ! Similarly if the structure of the ears were prejudicially affected , one could become stone deaf . The same is true of the mind and intellect. Humility, lowliness, the faculty of thought and reflection would all be stultified in case of distemper or disorder. Do we not observe how the mental faculties disintegrate in the case of the insane? Is it not then incumbent upon us to appreciate these God-given gifts? If we let these faculties that Allah, the Exalted has given us by His perfect Grace rust by disuse we would undoubtedly be guilty of ingratitude. Be mindful therefore, that if you pray leaving your talents and capacities unexercised, the prayer is of no avail. For, if the primary bounties are not utilized how can one be expected to use and to derive benefit from further bounties? We Worship Thee alone is a confession of: Oh Lord of universal providence we have not neglected thy first gift.”

What Hazrat Masih Maood (as) is saying in this extract is very important for all of us to understand the philosophy of prayer. As good Muslims we should strive to the utmost with all means at our disposal but at the same time we should have recourse to prayer because it is our faith that Allah is the source of all that is good. We rely upon Him for the end result. He further said:

“In “Guide us along the straight path”, man is urged to seek true insight from God. For, if His Grace and beneficence were not available, helpless man groping in darkness and blindness could hardly make a prayer. Thus, unless one makes full use of the Divine Grace that has been extended to one through *Rahmaniyyat* and then makes one's prayer, one cannot hope for any good result. An applicant for an agricultural loan is required to furnish proof of some assets. In the same way the law of nature demands that we should make good use of that which has already been bestowed upon us and then supplicate for more.

Having been blessed with reason, good sense, eyes and ears, if we have not gone astray and have not pursued stupidity and folly, we would receive more of grace through prayer. Otherwise destitution and misfortune are indicated.”(Annual Conference 1897)

Speaking further on this matter he says:

“When a person says: We worship thee and implore thy help; and sets out with sincerity and loyalty, then God, the Sublime causes to spring forth a wide stream of righteousness which flows down on his heart filling it with the spirit of righteousness. Man approaches with a paltry offering , but Allah the Exalted bestows upon Him a gift of great value. In this situation it behoves man so to deport himself that righteousness should become his outstanding insignia. He is then granted a volume of insights and verities that no one can stand in opposition to

him.”(*Al Hakam* 1905)

In the last extract that we will examine today we see how Hazrat Masih Maood (as) describes a Siddiq(Truthful) one. He says:

“The essence of the struggle to attain to the excellence of Siddiq (The Truthful) lies in man's submission: We worship Thee. To the extent of his capacity and potential, in full realization of his feebleness and nothingness, he determines to adhere to truthfulness and to discard falsehood. He turns away from every type of uncleanness and foulness that is inherent in falsehood, and keeps to his firm resolve never to tell a lie or to bear false witness or ever to utter anything false in a fit of temper or in idle talk, or for seeking a benefit, or to ward off harm, or under any circumstances whatever. By binding himself down so far he goes a certain distance in carrying out: We worship Thee. That in itself is worship of high quality. We worship Thee; is followed by: We implore Thy help. Whether he utters these words or not, Allah, the Sublime, the Source of all grace, and of truth and righteousness, necessarily helps him and reveals to him the high tenets and verities of righteousness.” (*Al-Hakam*, April 17, 1905).

These high tenets of righteousness are explained to us in chapter 2:178 as follows:

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but *truly* righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and spends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask *for charity*, and for *ransoming* the captives; and who observes Prayer and pays the Zakat; and those who fulfill their promise when they have made one, and the patient in poverty and afflictions and *the steadfast* in time of war; it is these who have proved truthful and it is these who are the God-fearing.”(2:178)

May Allah enable each one amongst us to be a truly righteous person. Ameen.