

FRIDAY SERMON

1st November 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:

All praises are due to Allah who has given all of us the opportunity to be present in this Friday prayer today. I will use this god-given opportunity to say a few words about the importance of attending Friday prayer as far as we can. I am not pointing to anyone in particular. I am just speaking generally with the hope that what I say may profit the common Muslim wherever he might be.

Allah says in the Holy Quran: "*Yaa ayyohallazina aamanou iza noudiya lissalaate min yawmil jomo'ate fas'aw ila zikrillahe wa zaroul bai zaalekoum khayroul lakoum in kountoum ta'lamoune*" (62:10) We translate this verse as follows: "**O ye who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah, and leave off all business. That is best for you, if you only knew.**" This verse is quite clear. There is nothing ambiguous in it that needs lengthy interpretations. All believers are addressed. Some say that only men are addressed. But the verse is quite explicit Allah addresses "all those who have believed" just like He uses the same form of address when He talks about the prescription of fasting in the month of Ramadan "*Yaa ayyohallazina aamanou koteba alaykomous siyaamo kamaa koteba alallazina min kablekoum la'allakoum tattakoume*". The translation of this verse is "**O ye who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it has been prescribed for those before you so that you may become righteous**". Hence it may be argued with cogent arguments that this instruction is for both men and women. However for men there are no concessions not to perform this important religious duty as there are for women in some periods of their life. Furthermore we do not see any obvious reasons why women should not listen to edifying sermons as men should. Anyhow the instruction to attend Jumma Prayer comes directly from Allah and deliberately ignoring it or showing negligence in performing it without due cause makes one liable to punishment in the sight of Allah. Hence every Muslim should make it a duty to see to it that he or she strives to read Jumma prayer every week.

Now in view of the fact that some people find it very difficult to extricate themselves from their business commitments and come to the mosque, I suggest that these Muslims reflect well upon this verse under discussion. Allah says that we should leave all business and move to the mosque for prayer. Hence there is a need to find a way to act according to this instruction. To begin with one should make the intention that one will do one's best to try to be present for Jumma Prayer. One should start praying to Allah in order to accomplish this instruction. At the same time one should start seeking practical means to be able to do so. For example one should see whether one cannot work for half day on Friday and replace the hours not worked on the other days of the week or on Saturdays. If one is creative in seeking means

I am sure Allah will provide the necessary means if one is sincere and prays to Him for guidance and help. If despite one's best efforts one is still not able to find a way one should seek forgiveness from Allah for being unable to carry out Allah's instructions. Since Allah is merciful and does not burden anyone beyond his capacity I am sure he will deal with such a person with great leniency. If in the past people had to attend mosques to listen to the sermons which form an integral part of the prayer spoken about on that day, such is not the case these days. Sermons are posted on the net and one can easily read them from there and try to absorb the teachings that are shared therein. May Allah enable all Muslims to make good use of the opportunity to attend and profit from the Jummah Prayers.

Since we are speaking about prayer I would like to share with you another set of extracts from the writings of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) where he speaks about the straight path (*siratam mustaqim*). The first extract is from *Al Hakam* and the second one from the Book "*Karamatus Sadeqeen*". Listen carefully. Later on try to read these extracts on your own and ponder over what has been said in them. May Allah open our heart to His Wisdom. Hazrat Masih Maood (as)says:

"It should be understood that *sirat-i-mustaqeem* which is based on truth and wisdom has three aspects, theoretical, practical and relating to self. Each of these is again three faceted. For instance, the theoretical comprises appreciation of that which is due to Allah, that which is due to His creatures, and that which is due to oneself. The practical demands the discharge of each of these three sets of obligations. That which is due to Allah in the theoretical sphere is to regard Him as the One, the Source of all beneficence, comprehending all excellences, the origin and returning-point of everything, free from every imperfection and short-coming, combining in Himself all perfect qualities and the sole Being to Whom worship is due. This is the theory of *sirat-i-mustaqeem* concerning that which is due to Allah. Its practical aspect comprises obeying Him with perfect sincerity, associating no one in the obedience due to Him, and supplicating Him alone looking up only to Him for the promotion of one's welfare and effacing oneself in His love. This is the practical *sirat-i-mustaqeem* concerning that which is due to Allah, and this is the very truth. The theoretical *sirat-i-mustaqeem*, concerning that which is due to one's fellow beings, consists in accepting them as one's kin as servants of God and in that capacity amounting to nothing independently of Him. For, true appraisal of God's creatures is that their existence is only derived from Him and is non-existent in itself, all being mortal. This is the theoretical definition of *Tauheed* (Unity), for, it emphasizes the Eminence of One Being Who suffers from no shortcoming and is perfect in His Being. The practical *sirat-i-mustaqim*, concerning that which is due to one's fellow beings, consists in practicing genuine virtue, that is, doing that which is

most beneficial and proper for them. This is practical *Tauheed* (Unity), the object of the creature being that all his conduct should be a reflection of Divine attributes.

The theoretical *sirat-i-mustaqeem*, in respect of that which is due to oneself, is that one should be aware of all the evils that spring from the ego, like self-estimation, ostentation, arrogance, spite, jealousy, vanity, greed, miserliness, negligence, and injustice and should estimate them as degrading traits of character as they are in fact. This is theoretical *Tauheed* (Unity), also as it emphasizes the greatness of only one Being Who suffers from no drawback and is altogether Holy. The practical *sirat-i-mustaqeem*, concerning that which is due to oneself, is to purge one's self of all low inclinations, to be emptied of all dross and to be equipped with all excellent traits. This indeed is the straight course (*sirat-i-mustaqeem*) in practice. This is also *Tauheed* as expressed in one's own being. For, the purpose of a believer in One God is to empty his heart of the intrusion of everything other than Allah, in order to attain to the stage where he is urged to merge in the Holiness of Allah. There is a fine distinction between this and the practical *sirat-i-mustaqeem* in respect of that which is due to one's fellow beings and that is that the former is a quality which can be acquired through exercise and is a latent distinction which may or may not find external expression. But the observance of that which is due to one's fellow beings has a practical aspect which finds expression in service of which the benefit should extend to large numbers of one's fellow beings so that the duty of service should be adequately discharged.

The practical aspect of *sirat-i-mustaqeem* concerning one's fellow beings, is fulfilled only through service and the practical aspect of that which is due to oneself is realized through self-purification and does not necessarily call for any service. This self-purification can be achieved even in the solitude of wilderness. But that which is due to mankind cannot be rendered except in the midst of one's fellow beings. That is why it has been said that there is no monasticism in Islam(57.28).

It must, therefore, be understood that the meaning of *sirat-i-mustaqeem*, both theoretical and practical is theoretical knowledge of *Tauheed* and a life lived in terms of *Tauheed*, that is, *Tauheed* through knowledge and *Tauheed* through practice. The Holy Quran sets forth only one true objective, true Unity, all the rest being means towards achieving it(Al-Hakam, Sept. 24, 1905).

In another extract he says:

This verse(*ihdenas siraatal moustaqeem*) indicates that *sirat-i-mustaqeem* is a great blessing and is the source of all gifts and the door to every bounty. When a person is honoured with this great kingdom and dominion that never decays, he becomes the recipient of favours upon favours. Whoso prepares himself for receiving this felicity and perseveres in the effort, is called to every type of guidance and enjoys a pleasant life and experiences an illuminating light, after nights of darkness. Allah saves him from every slip, admits him into the company of the righteous, after he had been involved with the rebellious, and shows him the ways of those He favours, those who have not incurred His displeasure and have not gone astray. The reality of *sirat-i-mustaqeem*, as designed in the firm Faith, is the servant's love for His gracious Lord, and his complete acceptance of the will of Allah and committing his soul and his heart to Him, and dedicating his whole attention to Him Who created man, and praying to none but Him, loving Him with all his heart and supplicating Him alone and seeking His mercy and compassion, and emerging out of his stupor, and walking straight and fearing the Gracious Lord, His love permeating his whole being with Allah helping him, strengthening his belief and faith. Then the servant inclines totally towards his Lord with all his heart and desires and reason and limbs and land and harvest, turning away from everything besides Him until there remains for him nothing but his Lord and he follows naught but His wishes and comes to Him with a heart emptied of all besides Him and seeks none but Allah in the paths of his journey and repents of priding himself or of being fascinated by wealth and the wealthy and presents himself before the Presence of the Lord like one destitute. He gives up the world and travels away from it and prefers the hereafter and seeks it and puts his trust in Allah and becomes His and is lost in Him and runs to Him like a lover. This then is the *sirat-i-mustaqeem* the end of the journey of the spiritual wayfarers, which is the final objective of the seekers and the worshippers. No mercy is bestowed until after this light neither descends nor is any true success achieved except after it has been possessed. This is the key by means of which the spiritual wayfarer expresses his innermost thoughts in his supplications to His Lord and whereby the gates of discernment are opened to him and He is made a *muhaddis* by the Most Forgiving Allah. Whoso makes this supplication secretly in the morning with sincerity and pure intent, observing all the conditions of righteousness and loyalty, undoubtedly arrives at the station of the chosen and the elect and the elite. One who heaves sighs, while supplicating the Bountiful Lord, like one who has lost his child, entreating acceptance of his prayer by Allah, the Gracious, with humility and lowliness, while his eyes overflow with tears,

his prayer is verily heard. He is granted a position of honour and is vouchsafed appropriate guidance. His faith is strengthened with arguments resplendent like rubies and his heart, hitherto weaker than a spider's web, is fortified. He is granted excellence of character and is enabled to observe minute details of piety. He is invited to the table of the spiritually exalted and to the pure provisions meant for the saintly. He overcomes at all times every desire, utilizing it under the superintendence of the law (sharia) as a vehicle to carry it wherever he wishes to go, like an expert rider bestriding a docile mount. He desires not the world nor puts himself in hardship on account of it; nor does he grovel before its golden calf. Allah is his Guardian and He indeed is the Guardian of the righteous. His mind is at rest, and has no tendency left to misguide him to his ruin. It no longer stares at the world like a hawk glaring at his prey from above. He sees the goals of his journey clearly like the munificent; his generosity is not niggardly; he is a source of freshness for others, like clear running water. Allah has urged His servants to seek of Him perseverance in striving for this position and steadfastness and ability to reach this eminence, for it is indeed a high position and an inaccessible objective, attainable by none except through the grace of their Lord and not at all through the exertions of their minds. It is, therefore, necessary that the worshipper should proceed to the Presence of the Lord of Honour, yearning for this prize and beg of Him success in this endeavour, standing and bowing down and in prostration, groveling in the dust of humility as the mendicants and the hard-pressed keep supplicating with outstretched arms (*Kar amatus Sadiqeen*, pp. 91-93).

May Allah grant each one amongst us such a spiritual rank. Ameen.