

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

On Monday 26th October I woke up with the following verse of the Holy Quran on my lips *iqtaraba linnaasi hisaabahoum wa houm fi ghaflatin mo'rezoune* which is translated as “Nigh unto men has drawn their reckoning, yet they turn away in heedlessness” (HQ 21:2). Since in the past whenever this verse had been revealed to me, I noticed that it announced a great calamity that would create great havoc in the world. So since morning I was quite apprehensive about what we would hear in the news. So by the afternoon I learnt that a severe earthquake has hit Pakistan and Afghanistan. In fact the epicenter of the earthquake was in Afghanistan about 136 miles from Kabul, the capital and its effects were felt in Pakistan’s capital Islamabad and nearby city of Peshawar. From preliminary reports that I have read it seems that the damage is quite considerable. Several houses have been destroyed and people have had to spend the night outside their homes for fear of aftershocks in almost freezing temperatures. We, in Mauritius cannot imagine the panic and devastation and misery that accompany such events because *Praise are due to Allah (Al hamdollillah)* we have never witnessed such an event by Allah’s Grace. But these days we can have an idea of the scale of this catastrophe when we watch images on television and the internet. Nonetheless our sympathy goes to those who have lost their homes and their dear ones in this great catastrophe. May Allah grant them courage and determination to restart building their lives and houses again and may He grant them the necessary patience to bear the loss of their dear ones.

In the Holy Quran we see that the verse that follows this verse is “*maa yaatihim min zikrin mouhdasin illastama’ouho wa houm yal’aboune*” which we translate as “There comes not to them any new admonition from their Lord but they listen to it while they make a sport of it”(21:3).

When we read both verses together we understand that most people lead a life of negligence. By negligence I mean they do not care much about acting in a way that will please their Lord. They devise their own ways and they are prepared to justify them even if they contradict the clear words of Allah and His Prophet (saw). Although the life cycle of human beings starts with birth or nine months prior to it and develops into adulthood and eventually ends with death, yet most people especially those who are negligent of their duties do not reflect on their end. Yet there are many verses of the Holy Quran which make it quite clear for us that death is inevitable. For example the verse which says “*wattaqou yawman tourjaouna fihe ellalla*” meaning “fear the day when you will be returned to Allah”

and many others. However most people lead a life without caring at all for that day of the meeting with Allah.

I started preparing this sermon on Tuesday last and I was wondering about the relevance of the revelations that I had received with the calamity that hit Pakistan and Afghanistan. Allah knows our deepest thoughts. So during the night of Tuesday to Wednesday I received the following verses of the Holy Quran which are usually read in the second Rakaat of Jummah Prayer:

“Admonish, therefore, for thou art but an admonisher;

Thou art not appointed a keeper over them.”(88:22-23)

Allah sends many “*Mozakkirs*” as He pleases. These *mozakkirs* just remind others about their duties to Allah. They do not keep account of people deeds. And in the last three verses of this same Sura Allah makes it clear that those who turn away He will take them to task and they will have grievous punishment. There are many in Pakistan who are saying that this earthquake is a reminder from Allah and the number of people resorting to mosques has increased overnight. But Pakistan is a country which has been visited by many calamities and yet its people do not stop from resorting to many unislamic values and practices. So we are reminded that our task is to follow what the Holy Prophet did even if it is within a restrained circle. We should keep reminding people. Whether they respond or not is not our concern. We should continue telling them what is good for them. At least this is what I have understood.

In the second part of this sermon I will talk about two hadiths of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw).

The first hadith is reported by Hazrat Ibn Masood (ra). He reports that once the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) said: “You people should feel shy of Allah the Almighty as it is His right that the people should feel shy of Him. The companions replied that they indeed feel shy of Allah the Almighty. The Holy Prophet (saw) said: No, not like that. He who feels shy of Allah as he should, he should keep an eye on his head and whatever it contains(ideas); he should keep an eye on his belly and whatever it contains(food); he should think of death and trouble and tribulations; he should keep an eye on the day of judgment , forsakes the beautification of this world. He who does all these things is the person who really and truly feels shy of Allah the Almighty.”

When we reflect on these words of the Holy Prophet (saw) we understand that we should learn to control our thoughts. If you start monitoring your thoughts you will notice that you can think only of one thing at a time and also that our thoughts keep changing. Learning to

focus it on something requires discipline and training and determination. We all know that as a great teacher of mankind the Holy Prophet (saw) was endowed by Allah the Almighty with wisdom that would benefit all mankind because he was a mercy to the whole of mankind. We all know that very often we are prey to satanic thoughts and at times especially when we are young it is quite difficult to get rid of them unless we are graced with Allah's Help. Even modern people have learnt how our thoughts determine what we become. Hence the need to control our thoughts.

Next the Holy Prophet has spoken about the food we put in our belly. We may understand it to mean that we should eat what is allowed (*halal*) and pure (*tayyab*) for consumption. We should not just revel ourselves with eating. These days we are all more or less aware of how damaging are bad eating habits. Next he says that we should think about death. Our destination on this earth is death. We should learn to live in such a way that we are not afraid of death. I know that it is not easy to understand and it is not easy not to be afraid. But if we cultivate a good relationship with Allah what is difficult will become easy for us. Some people say that these are morbid thoughts and we should avoid them. Such a thought would be bad only if we allow ourselves to be paralyzed by it and stop living. But the wisdom is that we should understand the inevitability of death and do the best that we can with the time that is available to us and stop postponing the doing of good deeds. The Holy Prophet (saw) has told us to think about the Day of Judgment and hope to fare well over there. Hence we should not be enamored with the sensual pleasures of this world. The Prophet (saw) has also told us to think about troubles and tribulations most probably because when we see these we know we should have recourse to Allah and He alone. In other words we need to lead our life by thinking and doing what is useful, by being focused on the ultimate aim of life and by avoiding everything that is useless which make us forget our own end.

So in order to be prepared to give an account of how we lived on this earth and not to be in a state of negligence (*ghafla*) we need to offer our prayers five times daily and presented in the best possible way to Allah. When we pray we should be focused on Allah and on no one else. We should take time to solicit Allah for our needs and also while we are praising Him or extolling Him. Allah expects us to rely on Him alone for all our needs but that does not mean that we should not make use of the faculties that he has given us. We should also ask forgiveness of Allah for every wrongdoing that we might have done knowingly or unknowingly in the past. We should also keep a close contact with the Holy Quran by reading and meditating on it every day. One should not just make a perfunctory recital just for its sake. One should strive to learn something new every day. It is this recital, this study of the Holy Quran that can help us to stay the course of our life when things get tough. So

we should keep reverting to this Holy Book for better understanding throughout our life. Remember that if we stick to the Book we will never be misguided by Allah's Grace.

There is another hadith which I would like to share with you. It is as follows:

“Hazrat Abu Huraira, may Allah be pleased with him reports that the Holy Prophet (saw) said: Beware of thinking evil of others; thinking evil of others is the utterance of the greatest lie. You should not try to find fault with others nor should you be investigating their affairs; you should not try to snatch the things of others that please you; you should not be jealous and inimical; you should not be indifferent. You should become brothers to one another in compliance with the command of God. A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim; he does not show injustice to him nor does he humiliate him nor does he take him to be an insignificant person. Here lies *Taqwa* (fear of Allah); here lies *Taqwa*. He pointed to his chest i.e to the heart. To hate his brother is quite a conspicuous evil for a Muslim. There are three things which are haram (which must not be violated) for a Muslim in respect of his Muslim brother; they are: his blood (to kill him) his honour and his belongings. Allah the Almighty does not look to your bodies (as to how beautiful they are or otherwise) nor does he look to your features nor does he look to the wealth that you possess.” (Muslim)

This hadith is quite important for all of us because in brief it spells out what is important and how we should behave with one another. The first thing that is said is that we should not think ill of others. We should be generous and give others the benefit of doubt. We should not be too quick to condemn. When we think ill of others very often what we have thought might not be true and that is why most probably the Holy Prophet (saw) has said that this is the greatest lie. Hence we should control ourselves and avoid thinking ill of others. Another interesting advice in this hadith is that we should refrain from prying into the affairs of others. We should limit ourselves to what are our own concern and under no circumstance should we try to know about others private affairs and talk about them. Similarly we are not allowed to take what is not ours. The Arabs prior to Islam were quite fond of this. Even today there are people who try through fair or foul means to take possession of others property. As good Muslims we are not at all allowed to do so. Muslims are expected to live like brothers and they should do their best to increase their brotherly feelings and they should try to help their brothers or sisters as best as they can. We should learn to be friendly in our conversation and dealings with others and remove any type of enmity that Satan tries to stir amongst us. We should be humble in addressing others and never belittle anyone whoever he might be. We should all understand and be conscious that we need to cultivate the love and fear of Allah in our heart and that we may possess the

world or we may have the prettiest face but Allah does not care if our heart is bereft of his love and fear.

May Allah guide us all and others as well to recognize Him and to obey Him wherever we might be.