

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

As I said last week we are re-reading extracts from the writings of the Promised Messiah about Surah Al Fatiha. Our members should take to heart the advices of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) and do their best to live by them. To make matters simple for human beings Allah has explained clearly in Surah Al Fatiha the means of approach to Him. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) says:

“There are three ways of arriving at faith in Allah, the Exalted, and of strengthening and invigorating it and all three have been set out by the Supreme God in Surah Fatiha. First, Allah, the Sublime, has emphasized His beauty by declaring Himself as comprising all praiseworthy qualities. It is obvious that beauty attracts hearts towards itself. Beauty has a magnetic quality which draws hearts close to it, such as the ray of the pearl, the comeliness of the horse, the splendour of raiment. In short, beauty, wherever it may be found, in flowers, leaves, stones, beasts, vegetables or minerals, draws hearts towards it involuntarily. God, the Sublime, has therefore set the first stage of faith in His Divinity through beauty, by saying that every type of praise belongs to Him. Next comes beneficence. Man, is as much drawn by beneficence as by beauty. Therefore, Allah, the Supreme, has next enumerated His Attributes Lord of Universal Providence, Gracious, Compassionate, Master of the Day of Requital, to draw attention to His beneficence. If, however, someone should happen to be so evilly-disposed that beauty and beneficence have not the power to move him, then he has been warned in Surah Fatiha in the words: those who were afflicted with Divine chastisement. People of a high degree of purity are captivated by Divine beauty and those next below them are affected by beneficence. But those who are evil-minded, have been warned by a reference to His majesty and wrath. The Jews have been called the people who incurred Divine displeasure. They were afflicted with the plague. God, the Supreme, has warned in Surah Fatiha against following the way of the Jews. In other words, He has warned against the painful visitation of the plague. Satan has such a grip over the headstrong ones that they hear but would not follow. The truth is that until passions and lusts suffer a death and are frozen, true faith in God, the Exalted, is difficult” (Al-Hakam, March 10, 1902).

Hazrat Masih Maood (as) explains that it is not sufficient for a Muslim just to avoid the major sins. It is the duty of the Muslims that he or she should try to develop in himself or herself qualities that characterized the prophets. He explains:

“If, as some people consider it a great virtue, the sole aim was to avoid the major sins, then the prayer to be included among the favoured ones would not have been taught; the ultimate stage of which is dialogue between God and man. The excellence of the Prophets (peace be on them) was not confined merely to abstention from stealing and burglary. In fact, they had no peer in their love of God, and in sincerity and loyalty to Him. He thus taught through this prayer that righteousness and Divine favour are the highest grade of virtue and until a person acquires these he is not considered virtuous or righteous and is not included among the favoured ones. We are further instructed to pray not to be included among those who incurred Divine wrath nor among those who went astray. This has been explained in another place in the Holy Quran that the perfect development of a believer's soul takes place by means of two kinds of elixir, one is termed the camphor elixir and the other is labelled the ginger elixir. When the camphor elixir is taken, the ego cools down and loses all inclination towards evil, as camphor has the property of dissipating all toxic elements and so does this camphor elixir dissipate the poison of sin and mischief and neutralizes and suppresses the elements that being aroused work the ruin of man. The other drink is the ginger elixir by means of which man gains strength and vitality to perform acts of virtue and a warmth is generated for that purpose. Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours; is then the real objective and aim. This, in a manner of speaking, is the ginger elixir: and not of those who incurred Thy wrath nor of those who went astray; is the camphor elixir (Al-Hakam, Jan. 24, 1905).

He says further:

“Until a person has laid up a treasure of righteous deeds he is not a believer. That is why God, the Supreme, has taught the prayer: Guide us along the straight path; in Surah Fatiha, so that one may not confine virtuous activity merely to abandonment of major vices like theft, adultery, etc. By pointing to the ways of the favoured ones, He has emphasized that righteousness and Divine favour are the highest grade of virtue and until a person attains to

them, he cannot be considered virtuous. God, the Sublime, did not teach the prayer: Do not include us among the law-breakers and the rebellious; and leave it there. He taught us to pray for being included among the favoured ones and not among those who incurred Divine displeasure, nor among those who went astray. These verses indicate that the full development of a believer's soul is achieved when he takes two elixirs. One of these is called the camphor elixir. It cools down the evil inclinations of the ego. Camphor has the property of neutralizing poisonous matter. In the same way, this camphor elixir dissipates the inner poison of sin and evil. The other drink is called the ginger elixir which gives one the strength to perform good deeds. That is why the supplication: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours, and not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray; has been taught in the Holy Quran whereby both the elixirs have been begged of Allah, the Exalted (Al-Badr, Jan. 10, 1905).

“The goal and aim of human life is to seek and to tread along the right path which has been mentioned in this Surah in the words: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours. This is the supplication that is made in every *rakaa* of every Prayer service. Its very repetition stresses its importance. Our community should remember that this is no ordinary matter and that the mere parrot-like repetition of the words is not what is required. In fact, this prayer is an unflinching and efficacious prescription for making a man perfect and it should be kept constantly in mind, as the objective and as a sure safeguard.”

Explaining the objective of the life of his followers he said:

“This verse propounds a supplication for the attainment of four kinds of excellence. If a person attains to these four excellences (*namely Nabi, Siddique, Shahid and Swaleh*), he will have performed the duty of prayer and of fellow-service and of having made worthy use of the faculties and talents he has been endowed with.

I want to warn you against those who aim at attaining these excellences by means of their self-invented prayers and incantations. Remember that a course that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) did not adopt, is futile. Who is a truer guide to the way of the Divinely favoured ones than the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him)? All the

excellences of prophethood reached their climax in his person. The way adopted by him is the most right and nearest to the purpose. Abandoning his way in favour of a self-invented one, even if it looks alluring, spells ruin in my view, and so has God, the Exalted, revealed to me.

“In short, to attain to the virtues of the Divinely-favoured ones to which Allah, the Sublime, has pointed in: ‘The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours’; is the goal appointed for every person. Our community should pay particular heed to this. For, by establishing this Movement, Allah, the Exalted, has designed to prepare a community like the one organized by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) so that it may bear witness to the truth and glory of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) (Al-Hakam, March 31, 1905).

“If it were true, as our divines proclaim, that the door of revelation is now closed, a seeker would suffer agonies of death while still alive. God is not niggardly. He has Himself taught us the prayer to seek the way of the Divinely-favoured ones which is a sure indication that the way to these favours is still open “(Al-Badr, Aug. 3, 1905).

“Know it for sure that one cannot please Allah, the Sublime, nor can one draw close to Him, until one treads along the straight path. That is possible only when one has knowledge of the Being and of the attributes of God and follows the ways and the directions that have His approval and lead to His pleasure. That being so, one must uphold faith above everything else in the world” (Al-Badr, Aug. 31, 1905).

“Preferring God to everything and accepting every bitterness out of true love for Him and genuine enthusiasm for Him, even creating bitterness for oneself, is an honour worthy of none but the righteous. This is the worship that man is called upon to render, and when a person performs this worship his action draws from God a bounty in terms of His direction in the Holy Quran, to make the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favours and whom Thou hast honoured with Thy special grace. When a service is appreciated by God a bounty is bestowed. The extraordinary signs and miracles which others are not able to duplicate are the bounties of God, the Supreme, which are bestowed on His servants (Haqiqatul Wahi, pp. 52-53).”

Speaking about the last part for the prayer where Muslims are taught to pray not to be like those who incurred Allah's displeasure or those who went astray namely the Jews and the Christians the Promised Messiah said:

“The authentic Ahadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet) have established, through constant reiteration, that by those who incurred Divine wrath are meant the evil-doing and rebellious Jews who denounced the Messiah as a disbeliever and designed to slay him, subjecting him to severe insults and calumny and whom Jesus cursed, as is mentioned in the Holy Quran. By those who went astray are meant the Christian deviates who deified Jesus and believed in the trinity and made salvation dependent on the blood of Christ and installed him on the throne of the Living God.

Thus, this prayer means: Lord, grant us Thy grace so that we may not become like the Jews who denounced the Messiah as a disbeliever and were after slaying him, nor may we deify Jesus and believe in the trinity.

Since God, the Exalted, knew that during the latter days, the Promised Messiah would be raised from among this ummat (the Muslims) and some Jewish-minded Muslims would denounce him as a disbeliever and would plan to murder him and subject him to gross insult and indignity and He also knew that belief in the trinity will have reached its climax at that time and many unfortunate ones would turn Christians, He therefore taught the Muslims this prayer. In this prayer the expression: those who incurred Thy wrath; sounds a note of warning that those who will stand in the way of the Promised Messiah of Islam will be marked in the sight of God, the Supreme, as having incurred His wrath like the opponents of the Messiah of Israel (Nazulul Masih, pp. 41-42).

So, we should all take the necessary time to delve into Surah Alfatiha and try to understand it as best as we can especially in the light of the comments of Hazrat Masih Maood (as). May Allah open our heart to this great treasure of wisdom. Ameen.

