

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

We are continuing with the third part of the speech delivered by Hazrat Masih Maood (as) on 26 December 1903 in Qadian. We shared the first two parts in the previous two sermons. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) was speaking about the need to develop a sincere relationship with Allah. He continued:

“Attainment of complete satisfaction and peace requires complete and total belief in God. Hence, the first obligation of our Community is to attain a true belief in God Almighty. Remember that for reformation of the self, mere suggestions and schemes cannot by themselves achieve anything. He who relies purely on his own plan of action is unsuccessful and fails because he considers his own effort to be ‘god’. Consequently, such people are deprived of the grace and blessing that kills their ‘capacity’ to commit sin and grants them the strength to protect themselves against evil and to fight evil. This is so because it comes from God Almighty Who is not a slave to schemes and plans. God has Himself provided an illustration of the failure of human schemes and plans.

God had commanded the Jews not to interpolate or distort the Torah. They were given firm instructions to protect and safeguard the Torah yet the unfortunate Jews made changes. Against this, the Muslims were told:

“Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian.” (Ch.15: v.10)

God states: ‘We have made the Qur’an to descend and We shall safeguard it’. Hence, you can see how perfectly the Qur’an has been preserved and safeguarded - not a single word or a jot has been altered or even changed around and no one has been able to distort it in any way. It is evident from this that the work that is in God’s Hands is greatly blessed and that which is in the hands of people alone cannot be so blessed. What is clear from this is that unless a plan of action is accompanied by God’s grace, nothing can be achieved.

Hence, it is a false notion to imagine that one can achieve purification of the self merely through one’s own effort. This does not, however, mean that one should not make any effort at all or that one should not strive [in the path of God]. On the contrary, effort and striving is necessary and is, indeed, a duty. God’s Grace does not

allow hard work and true effort to go to waste. Hence, one should not abandon plans of action and efforts required for reformation of the self but such plans should not be of the kind that are contrived by a person himself, rather only such schemes and plans should be adopted that have been described [in the Holy Qur'an] by God Himself and that have been adopted and practiced by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) of Islam.

Follow in the steps of the Holy Prophet (saw) and implore God for help through prayer. You are stuck deep in the mire of impurity but without God's Grace, you cannot reach the clean spring that would lead to purification – you cannot achieve this through your own efforts alone. There are many who abandon God and rely upon their own schemes but, even though they take every care and precaution, they become entangled in the trials [they have to go through] and cannot move forward. This happens because God's blessing is not with them and they do not receive guidance from God. He who abandons God yet declares that reformation of the self can be achieved through one's own ideas and plans is false. One path of self-reformation that has been described by God [in the Holy Qur'an] is this:

“Be with the truthful” (Ch.9: v.119)

)That is to say, keep the company of those who are steadfast upon the path of truth and manifest this through their words, their actions and their deeds.

Preceding this verse comes the statement: “O ye who believe! Fear Allah” (Ch.9: v.119) That is, believers should fear Allah and adopt the way of righteousness. Implied here is the teaching that first there should be faith and thereafter should follow the additional step of abandoning the place of evil and joining the company of the truthful. The company one keeps has a great influence that gradually affects the inner self. For example, if a person daily frequents the abode of prostitutes and [when reproached, declares his innocence by the rhetorical question] ‘Do I commit adultery?’ One should answer such a question by saying that, ‘Yes, you will do so’, and such a person, one day, will commit such an abomination because the company one keeps has an effect. Similarly, he who frequents the drinking house will one day indulge in drinking, no matter how much he protests earlier that he abstains from drink. Hence, this fact should never be ignored that the company of others is a factor of great influence.”

Here, I would like to quote a hadith to illustrate what the Promised Messiah is telling us. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "The example of a good companion (who sits with you) in comparison with a bad one, is like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith's

bellows (or furnace); from the first you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would either burn your body or your clothes, or you get a bad nasty smell thereof." Those who have ever been in a blacksmith shop know about this too well. The Promised Messiah (a.s) continues:

“It is for this reason that God has commanded that one should keep the company of pious and truthful people in order to achieve reformation of the self. The company of good people will leave its mark on a person who joins them even if he does so with animosity and opposition in his heart. Regular attendance in good company will eventually lead him to abandon his opposition. It is regrettable that those who oppose me have deprived themselves of the opportunity of joining our company. Had they spent some time with me and heard my arguments, a time would have come when God may have guided them against their mistaken views and they would have found the truth. However, as they have deprived themselves of my company and lost the opportunity of hearing my arguments, they now persist in their falsehoods. At times they accuse me of (God forbid) being an atheist and at times they refer to me as a drunkard and an adulterer. They think nothing of falsely accusing me of (God forbid) insulting the Holy Prophet (saw) of God. Why do they do so? They do so because they stay away from [our] company and depriving oneself of the company [of the one who has been appointed by God] is in itself being under the wrath of God.

It is stated that at the time of the Treaty of Hudaibiya, when the Holy Prophet (saw) camped at Hudaibiya, one of the blessings was that it presented many people with the opportunity of observing the Holy Prophet (saw) at close quarters. Having heard for themselves what he had to say, hundreds joined the fold of Islam. Until they themselves had heard the words of the Holy Prophet (saw), there existed between them and the Holy Prophet(saw) a barrier that was depriving these people from seeing the dazzling beauty of the Holy Prophet (saw). Consequently, when his enemies referred to the Holy Prophet (saw) as (God forbid) ‘Kazzab’ (a liar), these people followed and repeated the abuse which, in turn, distanced them from the Holy Prophet (saw), depriving them of the grace and blessings brought by the Holy Prophet (saw). However, when the barrier was lifted and people were able to see him and hear him for themselves, they no longer remained deprived – they entered the fold of those who are blessed with good fortune.

The misfortune of many people at the present time is caused by the same factor. If they are asked how much they have understood our claims and arguments, they only repeat the phrases that they have heard from others – a few false objections and a few

false accusations. They believe what they hear from our opponents to be true and do not try to understand. They do not as much as make an effort to investigate further by coming here and seeing for themselves. This leads to the darkening of their hearts and they are unable to attain the truth. Had they acted with righteousness, they would have known it was no sin to be in my company from time to time and to listen to what I have to say. After all they meet with Hindus and Christians and listen to their arguments – they even attend some of their meetings. What then was the reason that kept them from coming to me and on what basis did they abstain? This, in short, is a grave misfortune and a person suffers deprivation as a result. It is for this reason that God Almighty has commanded that we should seek the company of the righteous. This teaching contains a point of deep wisdom that the company one keeps necessarily exerts an influence. Hence, in the company of the truthful, not only does one learn truthfulness but one also benefits from the influence of the good company that is gradually internalized, leading to true knowledge with which one can attain a real understanding of God. Moreover, company of the Divinely guided provides the opportunity of witnessing signs and manifestations of God that strengthen one's belief [in God]. When a person is in the company of a truthful and divinely guided person, truth works within him. However, when he leaves the company of the truthful and adopts the company of misguided and mischievous people, evil begins to work within him. This is the reason why the traditions of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Holy Qur'an, both contain the firm guidance of abstaining from bad company. Furthermore, it is stated that one should leave a gathering where the Holy Prophet (saw) is being abused. Those who do not leave such gatherings will be counted amongst those perpetrating such an offence. By the same token, he who stays in the company of the truthful is counted amongst them. One can see how important it is that one should practice this divine commandment and seek the company of the righteous. It is stated in a tradition of the Holy Prophet (saw) that God Almighty sends down angels in the world to observe the gatherings of the righteous. Upon their return, God asks what they saw. They reply, 'We saw a gathering in which people were remembering You [God Almighty]. There was one person, however, who was present there even though he was not of them.' At this, God Almighty stated that he too will be counted among them.

It is evident from this that there is great benefit in keeping the company of the truthful. Unfortunate, indeed, is the person who keeps himself away from good company. One of the signs of *Nafse Mutmainnah*, the soul at rest, is that it finds peace in the company of those who are themselves at peace [with God]. On the other hand, the

person whose soul is [at the lower stage] of *ammarah* will display signs of *nafse ammarah*, of the soul that incites to evil. However, the person who keeps the company of those who possess *Nafse Mutmainnah* will soon begin to feel a sense of contentment within.”

May Allah help each one among us to achieve the stage of *nafse mutmainna* by Allah’s Grace. Ameen.