

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

When we ended the sermon last week, we were talking about the fifth stage of physical and spiritual development as explained by Hazrat Masih Maood(as). Today, we continue. He said:

“It is commonly observed and felt that no matter how beautiful a person may be, when he dies and the soul leaves his body, his beauty that had been bestowed on him by the power of the Almighty, is all at once affected. Even though all the organs and the features are present, and just with the departure of the soul the human body seems like a deserted and abandoned house, without any of its previous glory. The same is true of the fifth stage of the spiritual being. It is also commonly witnessed and felt that so long as a believer does not receive from Almighty God the spirit that is bestowed at the sixth spiritual stage, and which grants him extraordinary power and vitality, until then he is unable to exhibit the true brilliance of *taqwa* in respect of meeting God’s trusts and making their proper use, such as fulfilling the covenant of faith with absolute sincerity, and discharging the trust and obligations owed to God’s creatures. He lacks the brilliance of *taqwa* whose beauty and elegance draws hearts towards itself and all of whose graceful aspects appear extraordinary and miraculous.

Prior to the bestowal of this spirit, the *taqwa* of such a person is tainted by an element of superficiality and ostentation, as he lacks the spirit that can manifest the splendour of spiritual glory. And it is true and most certainly correct that such a believer, who is yet deprived of that spirit, cannot remain steadfast upon virtue. Rather, just as the limbs of a dead person might be moved by a gust of wind and return to their earlier state when the wind dies down, so is the case at the fifth stage of the spiritual being. At this stage, the believer is only temporarily moved by the breeze of the grace of God Almighty towards goodness and virtue and is motivated to act with *taqwa*. But since the spirit of virtue does not yet reside in him, it lacks the beauty which manifests itself in all its glory after the spirit of virtue has entered into him.

So, although the fifth stage of the spiritual being also partakes of the beauty of *taqwa*, this beauty only manifests itself to perfection at the sixth stage when the personal love of God descends upon the human heart as a spirit for his spiritual being and removes all imperfections. And man cannot become perfect simply by virtue of his own powers until that spirit descends from God, as Hafiz Shirazi says:

*We cannot reach that lofty threshold,*

*Unless You mercifully come forward a few steps [towards us].*

Then the fifth stage of the spiritual being is followed by the sixth which God Almighty has mentioned in this Quranic verse:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ

Meaning that the believers of the sixth stage who have surpassed the fifth stage are those who themselves safeguard and watch over their Prayers. In other words, they are no longer in need of someone else's exhortation or reminder, for they have attained such a relationship with God, and His remembrance has become so dear to their nature and so comforting, and has assumed such a pivotal role in their lives that they are ever engaged in safeguarding it. Every moment of their lives is spent in the remembrance of God and they do not want to be separated from His remembrance for even a single moment.

It is evident that man strives arduously and consistently, fully and all the time, to safeguard and protect only such a thing in whose loss he envisages his own ruin and destruction. For example, a wayfarer traveling through a barren wilderness, wherein there is no hope of finding water or food for hundreds of miles, will guard his belongings of food and water as dearly as his own life, for he knows that losing them would mean death for him. Thus, the people who safeguard their Prayers with the same care, and do not abandon them even if it means the loss of possessions or honour or even incurring someone's ire, and are anxious lest they miss their Prayers so that they all but die for the sake of Prayer and cannot for a moment bear to be oblivious to the remembrance of God, such are the people who in fact consider worship and remembrance of God to be the essential nourishment on which their life depends.

This state comes about when God loves them and a burning flame of His love—which can be called the spirit for their spiritual being—descends upon their hearts and gives them a second life. This spirit brings light and life to their entire spiritual being. In this state, their devotion to the remembrance of God is not out of artificiality or pretence; but rather God, who has made the physical being of man dependent on food and water, links their spiritual life, which is so dear to them, to the food of His remembrance. Hence, they love this food more than they love physical food and water, and are fearful lest they lose it. All this is the result of the spirit that is put into them like a flame, which inebriates them with the love of God's love. Therefore, they do not wish to be separated from His remembrance even for a single moment.

They suffer and face misfortunes, but do not wish to part from it even for a single moment. They keep an eye on their self, and protect and watch over their Prayers. And

all this comes naturally to them, for God has made the sustenance of His loving remembrance—which is called Prayer in other words—essential for them, and by inspiring them with His personal love has bestowed on them an exquisite pleasure in His remembrance. And so, God’s remembrance becomes as dear to them as their own life—nay, even dearer than their own life. Their personal love for God is the new spirit that descends on their hearts like a flame and makes their prayers and remembrance like unto sustenance for them. Therefore, they believe firmly that their lives are dependent, not on water and bread, but on Prayer and remembrance of Allah.

Thus, the much-loved remembrance of Allah, which is called Prayer, becomes their true sustenance without which they cannot survive at all. They protect and keep guard over it just as a traveler in a barren and waterless wasteland watches over his belongings of the few pieces of bread, and treasures the meagre amount of water in his sheepskin as life itself.

God the Supreme Bestower has decreed this stage also for the spiritual progress of man, and it is the last stage of the prevalence and predominance of personal love and adulation. And in reality, at this stage the love-filled remembrance of God—which, in the terminology of the Shariah [Islamic Law], is called the Prayer—takes the place of food. Indeed, time and again he wishes to sacrifice his own physical being for the sake of this sustenance, without which he cannot live, just as a fish cannot live without water, and he considers even a moment of separation from God as his death. His soul remains ever prostrate upon the threshold of God, all his comfort lies in God, and he is certain that if he were to be separated from the remembrance of God even for the blinking of an eye, it would be the end of him.

Just as food rejuvenates the body and grants vigour to the eyes, ears, and other faculties, in the same way, at this stage, the remembrance of God Almighty—that is inspired by the fervour of love and adoration— helps to sharpen one’s spiritual faculties. The eyes are thus blessed with very clear and subtle visionary powers, and the ears are able to hear discourse of God Almighty, and those discourses flow through one’s tongue with great purity, clarity, and exquisiteness, and one also continuously experiences true dreams, which come true as clearly as the breaking of dawn.

At this point, Hazrat Masih Maood (as) adds a footnote about dreams which is as follows:

“Many ignorant people are under the delusion that since they, too, at times experience true dreams and have a true revelation, then what is the distinction between them and these exalted people, and what superiority do they enjoy? The answer is that the faculty of experiencing true dreams or revelations is granted to common people only to a

degree in order for them to have a specimen of the subtle phenomena that transcend this world, so that they may not be deprived of accepting them, and the argument may be completed against them. Otherwise, if the people had been completely ignorant of the concept of revelation or true dreams, they would perforce reject them and could not be held fully answerable in this regard. So, while the philosophers of today deny the existence of true dreams and revelations even when they can see their specimen, then what would have become of common people if they had experienced no specimen of the kind at all. And the fact that many people occasionally have true dreams and experience true revelation does not take anything away from the glory of the Messengers and the Prophets, because the dreams and revelations of the common people are not free from the haze of doubt and ambiguity, and also are not as numerous. Just as a destitute person who has a penny cannot say that he too has money and is therefore at par with the king on account of that penny, so also is it foolish to claim equality in the case described above. (Author)”

Then he continues “By virtue of the relationship of pure love which they have with The Lord of Honour, they are granted many dreams that bear glad tidings. This is the stage where the believer feels that the love of God acts for him like bread and water. This new birth takes place when the spiritual body is already fully developed. It is then that the spirit, which is a flame of God’s personal love, descends upon the heart of such a believer, when all of a sudden, a power from on high carries him far and above his station of humanity. This is the stage which, in spiritual terms, is called *Khalq-e-Akhar* [‘Another Creation’].

At this stage God Almighty causes a burning flame of His love— which in other words is called the ‘Spirit’—to descend upon the believer’s heart, and removes all his darkness, impurities, and shortcomings.

As soon as the Spirit is breathed into him, the beauty that was hitherto at a lower level now reaches its climax. It creates a spiritual radiance and at the same time removes the uncleanness of evil life. The believer now feels that a new spirit has entered him that was not present before, and with its coming he experiences a wonderful serenity and contentment.

And the personal love of God gushes forth like a fountain and irrigates the plant of servitude. The fire that had till then produced little heat, begins to burn in full flame at this stage, and consumes all the filth of the human self, and hands over its control to God. The fire encompasses all the organs, and he becomes like the iron rod that is heated by the fire to such a degree that it turns red, indistinguishable from the fire itself.

Such a believer begins to show signs and characteristics of Divinity, just as such a believer begins to show signs and characteristics of Divinity, just as the iron rod at this stage exhibits the qualities and effects of fire. But this does not mean that the believer has become God. The fact is that love of Allah has the quality of transforming the outward human self into its own form, while inwardly there still remains the inherent human frailty. At this stage, for the believer, God is the bread upon which depends his life, and God also becomes the water by drinking which he can save himself from death, and God is also for him the cool breeze that brings solace to his heart". (*Barahin Ahmadiyya*, p. 291-296)

Incha Allah, we will continue next time. May Allah help each one amongst us to reflect upon these words and to understand them and to strive to live accordingly. Ameen.