

FRIDAY SERMON

06 May 2022

By Imam Zafrullah Domun

Alhamdo Lilla, by His Grace we have been able to complete the fasts of the month of Ramadan and we have celebrated Eid as well. Now, we return to the routine of another 11 months of the year where we are concerned with other types of worship and where the pressure of the month of Ramadan is absent. We will, of course, be involved in the performance of our daily prayers feeling the presence of Allah and we will be reading the Holy Quran regularly so that we might be daily reminded of our duties towards Allah and to His creatures. These are ongoing *Ebadaat* with which we busy ourselves in order to purify our gross self so that by the Grace of Allah it gets purified as time goes on. As good Muslims, let us all make the necessary efforts that are needed to endear ourselves in the sight of Allah and not in the sight of human beings. May Allah accept our efforts and may He help each one among us and Muslims in general to seek His help and to be constant in that search so that in His sight we are considered as being the best of creation (*khayrul barriyya*) as He has said in His Holy Book. Let no one among us neglect our duties and allow fruitless activities replace fruitful ones. Ameen.

The way I have understood Hazrat Masih Maood (as) is that each Ahmadi should have, so to say, a life project. Many people have life projects and they assiduously try to implement them. For an Ahmadi Muslim, his/her life project should be to become a beloved of Allah. The Promised Messiah (as) said:

“My purpose is that along with professing [belief] with the tongue, supporting actions are necessary”. Meaning that it is not at all sufficient to say that we are Ahmadi Muslims and we falsely think that we have a reserved seat in Paradise and we have achieved our life purpose. That is completely wrong. We need to know what is expected of us and we need to fulfill those expectations by practicing what is demanded of us. He also said:

“The intention of Islam is to make many Abrahams. So, each one of you should strive to become Abraham. Do not become a mere follower of a *wali* [saint]; instead become a *wali* yourself, and do not become a mere follower of a *pir* [holy person], instead become a *pir*”. (*Malfuzat*, Vol. 2, p. 139 [2010])

This is an extract that I have taken from the caliph’s Eid speech of last year. On the one hand, he quotes what Hazrat Masih Maood (as) said about what we should aim for. Once Allah honours such person and he (the caliph) becomes aware of him or them, he rejects him/them as if he/they were defeating the purpose for which the Promised Messiah (as) was sent by Allah. Whereas the contrary is true. Such people within the Jamaat could be

of great help. The caliph and others should reflect about this. Anyhow, this is not the purpose of my sermon today.

When Hazrat Masih Maood (as) tells us that we should develop our relationship with Allah to the highest level, he is not assigning us an impossible task. It is a task that is within our reach, by Allah's Grace. If we are sincere in our intention and we are ready to make the efforts required, Allah will do the rest for us. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has very well described how we should go about purifying our self in his highly appreciated speech/book *The philosophy of the teachings of Islam*. One should try to read this book and absorb and reflect these teachings in oneself. Anyone who will do so will see how very quickly he or she observes visible signs of what the teachings of that book produces in one's self.

Recently, I came across a book that has been translated from Arabic to English and French and maybe other languages as well. Its title is *Infamies of the Soul and Their Treatment* ('*Uyub alnafs wa adwiyatuha*). It is one of the earliest manuals on the purification of the soul. It remains widely read within the Muslim world until today. Its author is Imam Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad ibn al-Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Sulami (325–412 AH/ 937–1021 CE). Imam Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami has authored over one hundred works. He is most famous for his works related to spiritual development and its masters, though he was also an accomplished scholar of the Shafi'i school of law, a hadith narrator, and a historian. I will share with you some extracts from this book. I hope it might help each one among us insha Allah.

He said:

“All praise belongs to Allah who taught His elect [devotees] the infamies [bad qualities or wicked deeds] of their souls. He honored them with becoming acquainted with the treacheries of the soul, and He bestowed upon them awareness and attentiveness of the states that pass over it. He granted them success in remedying the soul's infamies and concealed evils, using remedies hidden [to all] except the attentive, resulting from their knowledge of the soul's sicknesses and busying themselves with remedies. And by this, He thus made what is difficult easy for them, by His grace and success...

Know that the soul is of three types: the one that incites evil [*ammarah*], the reproachful soul [*lawwamah*], and the one that is serene [*mutma'innah*]. The serene soul is certain that Allah is its Lord, has found serenity in what Allah has promised, deemed true what Allah Most High has said, and is patient with His command. It is the faithful soul that Allah Most High has made luminous, has put its book [of deeds] into its right hand, and has purified. It is the soul that is content with the decree of Allah and its destiny: good and evil, beneficial and harmful. It is the soul to which Allah Most High says, “Return to your Lord pleased...” – with Allah – “...and pleasing” (Q89:28) – to others due to its righteous deeds and attesting the promise of Allah Most High. The second [type of soul] is the reproachful soul. It reproaches good and evil, and is impatient [whether] things are

easy or difficult. It regrets what it has missed and reproaches for [missing] it, saying, “If only I had done such-and- such,” or “If only I had not done such-and-such.” It is the immoral and rejected soul. Whenever this soul is dutiful or immoral it reproaches: if it does a good deed it says, “Why didn’t I do more?” and if it does an evil deed it says, “If only I had not done that!” It reproaches itself in the Afterlife for squandering this life. It is the soul by which Allah Most High swore when He said, “And I shall swear by the reproaching soul” (Q75:2).

[The third is] the soul that incites evil, the one concerning which Allah Most High – when conveying [the story of] Yusuf (peace be upon him) – said, “The soul does indeed incite to evil” (Q12:53), [and elsewhere] “and curbed their souls’ passions” (Q79:40), “Do you see he who has taken his passion for his god?” (Q45:23), and other verses which indicate the evils of the soul and its little desire for good....”

Then he cites a hadith with its full *isnad*, reported by “Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him) who said that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said:

Tribulation, caprice, and lust are kneaded in the clay [constitution] of the sons of Adam.

Allah Most High says, “And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him” (Q22:78) – meaning striving against the soul and preventing it from following caprice.”

The first defect in the soul is according to him (Sulami) is “Expecting Salvation Despite Violations”. Among the infamies of the soul is its imagining that it is standing at the door of salvation, knocking with various litanies and good deeds while the door is open, yet it has shut the door of returning [to the truth] on itself through numerous violations. Al-Husayn ibn Yahya informed me, saying: I heard Ja‘far ibn Muhammad say: I heard Masruq say: Rabi‘a al-‘Adawiya passed by the assembly of Salih al-Murri while Salih was saying, “Whoever persists in knocking on the door is on the verge of the door opening for him.” Rabi‘a said, “The door, O underminer, is open but you flee from it! How can you reach a goal when you mistook its path from the first step?”

So, how can the slave escape the infamies of the soul when he is the one who pursues passions for it? Or how can one escape from chasing whims when he does not hold back from violations? I heard Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Ḥamdān say: I heard Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Thaqafi say: I heard Ibn Abi al-Dunya say, “One of the sages said, ‘Do not expect to sober up while you have an infamy. And do not expect salvation while you have a sin [against you].’” This condition is treated by what Sari al Saqti said: [by] traveling the path of guidance, wholesome nourishment, and complete protection [from Allah]”.

That is, by making a firm commitment to follow Allah’s prescription in his Holy Quran and by following the sunnah of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw).

“Another defect of the soul is Fearing Harm Where None Lies. Among the infamies of the soul is its attempts to detect danger from someone who does not possess it, expecting and worrying about his sustenance [*rizq*] while it has been guaranteed to him. This condition is treated by returning to [having] sound faith in what Allah reports in His book: “If Allah afflicts you with a misfortune none can remove it but He, and if He desires any good for you none can keep back His favor” (Q10:107), and His saying, “There is nothing walking the earth but its sustenance depends on Allah” (Q11:6). Al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays was asked: “What made you the leader of your people, seeing how you are not the eldest?” He replied, “I was never negligent with responsibilities. And I never went overboard in something of which I had been relieved.” And due to Allah Most High saying: “so worship Him and put your trust in Him” (Q11:123).” This condition is rectified when one looks to the weakness and inability of people. Then the individual will know that everyone who is not self-sufficient [and depends on others] is incapable of fulfilling another’s needs, and whoever is incapable is not able to carry out the material means of others. He will then be delivered from this infamy and return to his Lord in full.”

The fourth defect of the soul that he speaks of is “Unconsciously Slacking Off In Duties”. Among the infamies of the soul is its slacking off in [religious] duties it used to perform. A greater infamy is when the individual is not concerned with his shortcomings and slacking off. Greater yet is when one is not even aware of his shortcomings and slacking off. And an even greater infamy is when one presumes, he is thriving in spite of his shortcomings and slacking off. This occurs from having little thanks during the occasions when the individual was successful in maintaining those [religious] duties. When his thanks grew little, he was removed from the station of plenty to the station of deficiency – and his deficiency was veiled to him so he then deemed the soul’s vileness to be perfection. Allah Most High says, “Is he, the evil of whose deeds is made fair-seeming to him so that he deems it good [equal to one who is guided?]]” (Q35:8), “[Those whose efforts have been wasted in the life of the world] while they thought they were doing good” (Q18:104), “[But they split their affair between them into groups,] each party rejoicing in what it has” (Q23:53), and “Thus unto every nation have We made their conduct seem fair” (Q6:108).

This infamy is removed by continually seeking refuge in Allah; adhering to making remembrance of Allah; reading His book [the Quran] and seeking out its meanings; venerating the sanctity of Muslims; and asking the friends of Allah [*awliya*] to pray for him that he return to the first state – perhaps Allah Mighty and Sublime will bestow upon him a blessing by opening to him a path to serve and obey Him.”

Incha Allah, I will share more from this book so that we might all know how our soul deludes us and be ready to correct our own defects, incha Allah. May Allah help each one among us to tread the path that will lead us to Allah. Ameen.