

FRIDAY SERMON

13 May 2022

By Imam Zafrullah Domun

Very often, we read Sura Al A'la (ch. 87) of the Holy Quran in Jumma prayer as did the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) although he also read some other chapters as well from time to time. There is one verse in it which has been often commented upon by Hazrat Masih Maood (as). That verse is:

”قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى“

Verily he who purifies himself prospers (87:15)

Similarly, in another place in the Holy Quran, we read:

”قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا“

He indeed *truly* prospers who purifies it,

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

And he who corrupts it is ruined. (91:10-11)

And we also read from the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

O ye who believe! be heedful of your own selves. He who goes astray cannot harm you when you *yourselves* are rightly guided. To Allah will you all return; then will He disclose to you what you used to do. (5:106)

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۚ وَإِنْ تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَىٰ حِمْلِهَآ لَا يَحْمِلْ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ ۖ إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ ۚ وَمَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّىٰ لِنَفْسِهِ ۚ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

And no burdened *soul* can bear the burden of another; and if a heavily laden *soul* call another to *bear* its load, naught of it shall be carried *by the other*, even though he be a kinsman. Thou canst warn only those who fear their Lord in secret and observe Prayer. And whoso purifies himself, purifies himself only to his own advantage; and to Allah shall be the return. (35:19)

From these verses, and many others that I have not mentioned, one can understand that if we want to really succeed in our life mission, we should bear these verses in mind. Allah defines success not as we define it. In the eyes of Allah, it is different. As good Muslims,

we are expected to follow the guidance that Allah has given us through His Mercy namely the message that He has sent to us through His Prophet Muhammad (saw). The guidance that Allah has provided us with for our own benefit so that we might not lose ourselves in our brief sojourn on earth. In our frantic desire to succeed, we see ourselves climbing the ladders of material success to eventually come to the conclusion that this ladder was leaning against the wrong wall.

Through the teachings of Islam, Allah helps us to set our priorities right and our choices are not like those who have forgotten Allah completely and have made this life and all its enjoyments be the all and end all of our existence. The Muslim knows that there is more to life than just working, eating and sleeping, to say the least. He makes an effort to learn the real purpose of his life and he does his best to achieve that purpose throughout the remaining days that he has to live. I will repeat myself by saying that Hazrat Masih Maood (as), as a follower of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw), quite superbly helped us to understand the stages that our soul goes through in life in his book “The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam”. We should read that book and try to understand how far we are progressing on that path. May Allah help us to tread the path that He has chosen for us and not the path that we think is best for us by imitating what others are doing.

As I said in my previous sermon, I will share with you extracts from the translation of an 11th century booklet “*Oyub un nafs wa adawiyaateha*” meaning “*the defects/diseases of the soul and their remedies*”. We will continue from where we left off. He said:

“And among its maladies is that one obeys but does not find pleasure in his obedience, and that is due to the contamination of his obedience with ostentation and lack of sincerity in it or leaving [the performance of] one of the sunnah of the Prophet. And the remedy is demanding sincerity of the *nafs* and maintaining the Sunnah [of the Prophet] in one’s actions and correcting the foundation of His commandments in order to make his end sound.” He continues:

“And among its maladies is that one hopes to benefit from attending spiritual gatherings (auspicious occasions) and if he realized [the true nature of his *nafs*], he would lose all hope for the people at the spiritual gathering [attaining any benefit] due to the misfortune of his presence. As was said to some of the pious predecessors, “How did you regard the people on the day of standing at Arafat? He said, “I saw a people that if I weren’t among them then I would hope that God would forgive them.” This is the way the people of wakefulness regarded their *nafs* [with suspicion]. And the remedy is knowing that even if God forgives him for his sins, He has observed him committing errors and transgressions and so he is ashamed of that and regards his *nafs* with suspicion. As Fuḍayl Ibn ‘Iyād said, “Shame on you, even if you are forgiven.” That was due to his realization of God’s knowledge of him and His regard of him.

[10] And among its maladies is that you will not bring it (soul) to life until you cause death and lose it, meaning that you do not bring it to life for the hereafter until you cause its death from the world, and you do not live for God until you die from all that is other than God. And Yaḥyá Ibn Mu‘ādh al-Rāzī said, “Whosoever draws near to God through the loss of his *nafs*, God will preserve his *nafs*,” and that means to forbid it from its passions and compel it to what it finds loathsome [but which God demands of it]. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “Paradise is surrounded by adversity and the fire is surrounded by temptations.” And the remedy is night vigils, hunger and thirst [fasting], undertaking the opposition of one’s natural inclination and *nafs*, and forbidding it from the objects of its passions. I heard Muhammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Faḍl saying he heard Muhammad Ibn al-Rūmī saying Yaḥyá Ibn Mu‘āth al-Rāzī said: “Hunger is the nourishment by which God strengthens the bodies of the truthful.”

[11] “And among its maladies is that it never grows accustomed to the truth ever and obedience is contrary to its character traits and natural disposition and the greater part of that derives from following its capricious whims and passions and whosoever does not sacrifice it with knives of spiritual striving will not be brought to life. God Most High said to a group of the sons of Israel, *So repent unto your Maker and slay yourselves* [al-Baqarah 2: 54]. And the remedy is to abandon it for its Lord-sustainer completely, and for this the Friend [Abraham] was ordered to sacrifice his son. *But when they had submitted and Abraham had laid him upon his forehead* [al-Ṣāffāt 37: 103] it was said to him *thou has been true to the vision* [al-Ṣāffāt 37: 105], then He ransomed him with a great sacrifice. And Junayd said, “God has forbidden paradise for one who holds fast to relationships.” And the ultimate cure is leaving them entirely for their Lord-sustainer. I heard Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Rāzī say he heard Abū al-Qāsim al-Miṣrī in Baghdad say, “Ibn Yazdānyār was asked about the servant when he leaves all for God, on what basis does he do so. He said, ‘On the basis that he will not return to what he left, and he preserves his *nafs* from considering what he has left.....’

[12] And among its maladies is that one is accustomed to trivial passing thoughts so that transgressions become ingrained. And the remedy is responding to those passing thoughts in the beginning lest the transgression become ingrained and that is [accomplished] by constant *dhikr*, and remaining steadfast in fear [of God], and knowing that God knows what is in your secret-heart just as well as people (*al-khalq*) know what you make public, so feel ashamed that you rectify for people whatever is in their sight and fail to rectify what is in the sight of God (*al-Ḥaqq*). And the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “Indeed God Most High does not regard your [outer] appearances nor your good deeds, but rather he regards your hearts.” I heard Abū Bakr al-Rāzī say he heard Abū al-Husayn al-‘Alawī, the companion of Ibrāhīm al-Khawwās, say he heard Ibrāhīm al-Khawwās, may God have mercy on him say, “The first part of sin is a passing thought, and if one does meet it with disgust it will

become emboldened. Then if it is not met with denial it will become a temptation (*waswasah*) and if it is not met with striving against it, passion and following [one's] capricious whims will be ignited, thus obscuring intellect, knowledge and clarity.” In this way, it was narrated in the tradition that “capricious whims and passion overcome knowledge, intellect and clarity.”

[13] And among its maladies is preoccupying oneself with [other] people's faults and one's blindness to one's [own] faults. And the remedy is perceiving the fault of his *nafs*, knowledge of it, and his realization of its cunning. And he treats it by embarking on long journeys, isolation [from people], frequenting the pious and carrying out their instructions. And the least one can do, if he does not undertake the treatment of the maladies of his *nafs*, is to remain silent about the maladies of [other] people and find excuses for them and cover over their faults in hopes that God will rectify his faults for doing so. For indeed the Prophet, صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “Whoever covers the private matters of his Muslim brother, God will cover his private matters. And the Prophet, صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “And whoever concerns himself with the private matters of his Muslim brother, God will look into his private matters, and then He will expose him even if he were in the privacy of his home.” I heard Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Shāthān who heard Ibn Yazdān al-Madāinī say, “I saw a people who had faults, so they remained silent about the faults of [other] people; therefore, God concealed their faults and those faults were removed from them. And I saw a people who did not have faults and then occupied themselves with the faults of [other] people, thus they acquired faults.”

These ideas are quite simple to understand. We should all get busy, preoccupied in looking at our own selves and get busy in uprooting all our defects or maladies. Besides, we should pray that Allah purify us and we should persist in trying to do good if we really want to be saved. May Allah help each one among us and may we all be saved by His Grace. Ameen.