

FRIDAY SERMON

15th March 2024

By Imam Zafrullah Domun

As we said last Friday, we have entered the month of Ramadan in the beginning of this week. For us here, in Mauritius, it is the fourth day of fasting. But in the Middle East and Europe, they started fasting on Monday last. Therefore, for them it is the fifth day of fasting. So, we can say that, as usual, time is flying. Hardly have we started that we have fasted for three or four days and soon the month will be over.

Since most of us have already known several years of Ramadan by now, we know how the month passes by very quickly. Since we already know how quickly it will vanish, we should do our best to make good use of the time available to us to fast in the best possible way and to pray as much as we can in the best possible way so that we might become accepted by Allah.

As we are all aware, the first verse in the Ruku where Allah has prescribed fasting for us is as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous. (2:184)

This verse is addressed to all adult Muslims (men and women) who can fast to fast. Fasting simply means to stop eating and drinking and having sex from dawn to dusk. The daily time of fasting is different around the world and everywhere it changes slightly every year. If these days we, in Mauritius, are fasting for about thirteen and a half hours, soon in the coming years the duration of a day's fast will be around 14 hours and we would be feeling quite hot as well. In the northern hemisphere, fasting hours are longer, gradually decreasing over the month, while in the southern hemisphere, fasting hours are shorter, gradually increasing. This year the longest

hours are in countries like Greenland and Iceland (16 hours) and the shortest ones are in Australia and New Zealand (13 hours). I am giving this piece of information so that we do not think that our fasting is too tough.

Fasting is one of the prescriptions of the Holy Quran. Some scholars have said that there are more than 700. As Muslims, it is our duty to strive to put into practice all of them. If we neglect anyone of them, we would be closing the door of our salvation by our own hands according to Hazrat Masih Maood (as). Allah tells us in the abovementioned verse that He has prescribed it for us so that we might become righteous. Simply put, it means that we refrain from Allah's prohibitions and we do our best to implement all His Prescriptions in our daily life until we die. Hence, we should value this blessed month that has been given to us. We should thank Allah for granting us this month so that we may get the occasion to become truly pious in His Sight. We are all prone to mistakes, to sins and our conscience makes clear to us what is sin and what is not. There is no need for someone to tell us especially if we read our Holy Quran because it contains everything that Allah expects from us. Blessed Ramadan comes so that each one among us might renew our commitment that we will give Allah priority in our life under all circumstances and we will try to become pious by following His instructions and by walking in the path of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw).

We, Ahmadi Muslims, have been blessed that Allah, the High, has guided us to recognize the Mahdi and Messiah that He has sent to take the world "out of darkness into light." During his lifetime, he did his best to make people understand his message. He spelled quite clearly for us the meaning of righteousness. He said:

"And you, too, should partake of the Holy Spirit by compassion and by purifying your souls. Because without the Holy Spirit true *Taqwa* cannot be attained. And, totally shedding all base desires of the self, choose for the sake of winning the pleasure of God that path compared to which no path can be narrower and straiter. Don't fall in love with the pleasures of the world, for they take you away from God. Choose a life of austerity for the sake of God.

The pain which pleases God is better than the pleasure which makes Him angry. And the defeat which pleases God is better than the victory which invites the wrath of Allah. Renounce the love which brings you nearer to the wrath of Allah. If by purifying your hearts you come to Him, He will help you whichever path you tread and no enemy shall ever be able to harm you. You can never ever win the pleasure of Allah unless you, relinquishing your desires, abandoning your pleasures,

sacrificing your honour, disowning your wealth, discarding your life, bear such hardship in His Way that you suffer the pangs of death. But once you suffer such hardship, you will sit in the lap of God like a beloved child. And you will be made heirs of the truthful who have preceded you.

The door of every blessing will be opened to you. But there are few who belong to this category. God addressed me and said that *Taqwa* is a tree that should be planted in the heart. The very water which nourishes *Taqwa* irrigates the whole garden. *Taqwa* is a root without which everything is meaningless; and if it remains intact then nothing is lost. What benefit is there for a man in indulging himself in the useless activity of claiming with his tongue that he seeks God while he has no sure footing with his Lord. Look, I say to you truly and sincerely that ruined is he whose faith is tainted by even a hint of worldliness. Hell is very close to that soul all of whose intentions are not for God—rather some of them are for God and others are for the world. Thus, if you have an iota of worldly adulteration in your intentions, all your worship is in vain. In such a case you do not follow God. Rather you follow Satan. Never ever expect that when you are in such a condition God will help you. Rather in this condition you are a worm of the earth and soon you will perish just as worms of the earth do. And God shall not be in you. Rather He will be happy to destroy you. But if you, in reality, die by killing your baser selves, then you shall appear in God and God shall be with you. And the house in which you live will be blessed and God's mercy will descend on the walls which are the walls of your house. And that city shall be blessed where such a person lives. If your life under these trials, you step forward towards God— then I truly say to you that you will become a chosen people of God. You, too, are human as I am human and that very God Who is mine is yours. So don't lay waste your noble capacities. Look! if you fully incline towards God, then be reminded—and I say it in accordance with the will and pleasure of God—that, you shall become His chosen people. Let the Greatness of God take root in your hearts; and acknowledge His Unity not just with your tongues but also with your actions, so that God, too, practically shows His Mercy and Kindness to you. Refrain from malice and treat human beings with true compassion. Adopt each and every path of righteousness for who knows from which of these paths you will be accepted?

Rejoice and be happy that the field of achieving nearness to God is vacant. Every nation is in love with the world and to what pleases God the world pays no attention.

Now is the time for those who wish to enter this door that they, mustering all their strength, show their mettle and win the much-coveted prize from God. Don't think that God will let you go to waste.

You are the seed which the Hand of God has sown in the earth. God says that this seed will grow and flower and its branches will spread in all directions and it will become a huge tree. So, blessed is one who believes in what God says and does not fear the trials which he suffers in His path. For, the coming of trials is essential so that God may try you to see who is true in his declaration of *Bai 'at* and who is false. Whoever falters in the face of a trial would do no harm to God whatsoever and ill-luck would only land him in hell. Were he not born, it would have been better for him. But all those who remain steadfast till the end—they will be shaken with quakes of calamities, and battered with storms of misfortune, ridiculed and mocked by people, and hated and reviled by the world—shall at last come out victorious. And doors of Blessings shall be thrown open for them. God addressed me and said that I should inform my *Jama 'at* that those who believe and their belief is not adulterated with worldly considerations and is free from hypocrisy and cowardice and is not found wanting at any stage of obedience, such people are the favorites of God. And God says that indeed these are the ones whose station is that of Truth.” (The Will, p. 9-12)

So, in the light of this extract of Hazrat Masih Maood (as), we can use fasting and the opportunities that it gives us to strive better to develop these noble qualities within ourselves. Prior to sehri we can wake up a few minutes or a half hour and pray two *Rakaat* Tahajjud prayer. In a hadith, it is reported that The Holy prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

‘Whoso stands in *tahajjud* prayer in Ramadan with firm faith and with the intention of achieving the pleasure of God, all of their previous sins are forgiven.” (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, Kitab Al-Saum)

Hazrat Masih Maood (as) used to read four pairs of two *Rakaat* of Tahajjud in Ramadan and in the first *Rakaat* he read only *Ayatul Kursi* (2:256) and in the second *Rakaat* he read Sura Al Ikhlāas (Ch.112). But he prayed a lot both in Ruku and Sajda. Most of the time he repeated

Ya hayyu ya qayyum be rahmatika astaghiis

“O Living and Self-Sustaining God, with Your mercy do I seek help.’

To start with, everyone can do this quite easily. Once we get used to it, we may add more *Rakaats* and pray more fervently. We may also pray some *nafls* during the day. Besides these we should make it a habit to read *Subhanallah*, *Alhamdo Lillah* and *Allaho Akbar* after each *faraz* prayer as we already know. In addition, we should also make it a habit reading some portion of the Holy Quran every day. In this way, Allah will help us to make the most of the Holy month of Ramadan. Each one should easily be able to know how far he is close to the standard described above by Hazrat Masih Maood (as). If he or she is far from it, he/she should not be discouraged and give up. On the contrary, he/she should summon his/her courage and strive to achieve this standard of behaviour. If we are living a life according to this standard, we should still continue on the same path because eventually Allah will reward us for this. May Allah help each member of the Jamaat to do our best to implement these pieces of advice during and out of Ramadan. *Ameen*.