



24. The Status of Prayers

Delivered by His Eminence
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...There is something that has tremendous importance in Islaam. It is a means to attaining provision, it preserves health, it averts harms, it repels illnesses, it strengthens the heart, it brightens the face, it makes the soul happy, it eliminates laziness, it gives the limbs vitality, it enhances one's strengths, it puts the mind at rest, it nourishes the soul, it enlightens the heart, it preserves blessings, it drives away ills, it yields many blessings, it keeps one away from shaytaan, and it brings one closer to Allaah, the Most Merciful. There are many texts of Islaam which show its status, as well as the unique features it has to the exclusion of all other deeds. Scholars of Islaam have written much about its wisdom and importance, and they have elaborated in great detail about the actions and statements it contains. Teachers and preachers of Islaam regularly remind people of its obligation, and it could never be otherwise since it is the foundation and pillar of Islaam which comes second only to holding the correct belief of tawheed (i.e. that Allaah is completely unique in His Lordship, His names and attributes, and His right to be worshipped).

The issue we are referring to is prayer, and what could ever completely apprise you of the true paramount importance it has in Islaam?!

Obligatory prayers are the primary obligation in Islaam after having correct beliefs about Allaah and His Messenger. Establishing prayers properly is the way to genuinely devote oneself to Allaah and attain happiness as well as nearness to Allaah. On the other hand, forsaking prayers is tantamount to turning away from Allaah, and it leads to a life of misery and remaining distant from Allaah. Prayer forms a bond between a worshipping servant and his Lord. When prayer is forsaken, that bond is severed.

Servants of Allaah, do you know what it means to have that bond severed? It means ruin for an individual, it exposes him to various types of destruction, and it leads to him being forsaken by Allaah. What goodness possibly remains for a person if he is distant from Allaah, his connection with his Lord is severed, his supplications are obstructed from being answered, his Guardian Lord entrusts the person to himself, and he is barred from Allaah's mercy?

Dear Muslims, obligatory prayer is the noblest and most important physical act of worship, and it is the means for weak created beings like ourselves to have a bond with Allaah who is the source of strength, mercy, and completion. The only people who understand the value of prayers are those who establish them in the prescribed manner, taste the sweetness they contain, and continue to draw nearer to pleasing their Lord. Prayers contain unspeakable enjoyment. In fact, the source of comfort for our Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) was prayer. He used to say to his Companion who called the athaan, "Bilal, proclaim the call so that we can find comfort in prayer."¹ When the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) felt apprehensive about anything, he would resort to prayer. How could it be otherwise in light of the fact that prayer is what any penitent person should resort to during adversities? When a person in distress prays, his distress would be removed and tranquility is restored to his heart. Thus, prayer is among the most effective methods of achieving wellness of the mind.

¹ See Sunan Abee Daawood (4985). Graded saheeh by al-Albaanee.



As for someone who does not establish obligatory prayers, such a person would in reality remain scattered, disoriented, and lost. True success, salvation, profit, guidance, and facilitation are not attained by anyone besides those who establish obligatory prayers. Others will only bring upon themselves loss, misery, degradation, and blame. Obligatory prayer is a foundational pillar that supports one's religious practice. When a person neglects to establish it, the effects of that negligence will become manifest in the person's conduct. Where will he head at times of difficulty? What will he resort to for assistance during adversity? What rest, tranquility, or happiness can a person find when he stays far from his Lord, does not pray to Him, and does not prostrate to Him? Allaah, the Most Exalted, said, **((When a person turns away from My obedience, he will certainly have a life of misery))**.¹ Someone who does not pray incurs blame and will remain in a state of distress. Any person who does not pray will be obstructed from reforming himself. Consider the statement of Allaah, the Most Exalted, **((I will be with you if you establish obligatory prayers as prescribed))**.² This implies that if a person does not pray, he would not find assistance or support from Allaah.

Servants of Allaah, all of the aayaat, ahaadeeth, and aathar about prayer clearly show its importance in Islaam; and they warn against forsaking it, neglecting it, or treating it lightly. Some of those texts are the following:

Allaah, the Most Exalted, said, **((If they repent, establish obligatory prayers, and give obligatory charity, they would have become your brothers in Islaam))**.³ This shows that obligatory prayer is something that sets people of Islaam apart from others.

Allaah, the Most Exalted, also said, **((Severe punishment awaits those who perform prayers carelessly by neglecting to establish them in the prescribed manner or by delaying them beyond their appointed times))**.⁴ Here, Allaah reprimanded those who pray, but do so in the foregoing manner. Thus, what do you think the case would be for those who do not pray at all?

Regarding the magnitude of punishment that awaits those who forsake obligatory prayers, there is a portion of a long hadeeth in which the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, "Two individuals came to me during the night. The two of them got me up and told me to proceed along with them, and I did so. We eventually came to a man who was lying down while another stood over him with a rock. The one standing would drop the rock upon the head of the one lying down, it would fracture his head, it would roll away, and the one who was standing would go after it and retrieve it. By the time he returned, the head of the one lying down would have healed and returned to the way it was before being fractured. Then, the one standing would do the same thing again. I said to the two individuals I was with, 'Subhaanallaah! What are these men doing?' The individuals I was with both told me, 'Proceed, proceed.' We then proceeded onwards...I eventually told them, 'I saw some astonishing things tonight. What were those things I saw?' The two of them said, 'We will inform you. As for the first man you found using a rock to fracture the head of the man lying down, the one lying down was someone who memorized the Qur'aan but then rejected it, and he also slept and, thus, neglected obligatory prayers.'" This was collected by al-Bukhaaree.

'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (may Allaah be pleased with him) said, "The most important matter of your religion to me is obligatory prayers. When a person establishes them properly and remains consistent in doing so, he preserves his religion; but when a person neglects them, he will end up even more negligent of other aspects of his religion."

¹ Soorah Taa Haa (20):124.

² Soorah al-Maa'idah (5):12.

³ Soorah at-Tawbah (9):11.

⁴ Soorah al-Maa'oon (107):4-5.



‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with both of them) stated, “There is no eemaan for a person if he lacks trustworthiness, no prayer for a person if he lacks purification, and no soundness of religion for a person who lacks prayer. The place prayer holds for one’s religion is nothing less than the place that his head holds for his body.”

‘Abdullaah ibn Mas‘ood (may Allaah be pleased with him) said, “The first part of your religion that you will lose is trustworthiness, and the last part of your religion that you will lose is prayer.”

When people of eemaan recognize the status held by obligatory prayers, they increase in their love for them, attachment to them, and concern for them. They long for their prayers and give them precedence over all other things that are beloved to the human soul.

Prayer is the provision with which people of perseverance equip themselves, and it is something special that people of taqwaa store away for themselves. While ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Abbaas had once travelled on an expedition, he received news that his brother Qutham had passed away. Upon hearing that, ibn ‘Abbaas said, “We most certainly all belong to Allaah alone and we will most certainly all return to Him”, and he then went to the side of the path and prayed two rak‘ah units in which he remained sitting for a long time. He then stood and walked back to his mount while he was reciting the ayah, **((Seek assistance by way of patient perseverance as well as prayer. However, that is certainly difficult to put into practice except for those who maintain their humility towards Allaah, devotion to Him, and reverential fear of Him))**.¹

A person of eemaan is to consistently maintain obligatory prayers by establishing them at their times; and give attention to their prerequisites, pillars, obligatory elements, and optional elements. He is to continue performing them, and never neglect them, no matter what circumstances he faces. Allaah described His obedient servants who pray as being people who **((remain constant in performing the prayers that have been prescribed for them))**² and who **((perform obligatory prayers consistently without letting anything divert them from offering their prayers as prescribed))**.³ Some scholars have commented that the instruction to persevere in constantly establishing obligatory prayers as prescribed, and in treating both of one’s parents well, is an obligation that must always be fulfilled; and none remember that Allaah always sees them throughout that all except for those who remain true to Allaah.

The fact that a person is to give attention to ensuring the completion of his prayer should be nothing surprising. Aboo Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: I heard Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) say, “The first thing a servant of Allaah will be taken to account for on the Day of Resurrection is his prayer. If it is intact, he will be successful; but if it is corrupted, he will suffer loss.” [saheeh] This was collected by Aboo Daawood, at-Tirmitheh, and an-Nasaa’ee.

Dear Ummah of Islaam, Allaah – the Most Exalted – urged us to maintain obligatory prayers in His statement, **((Consistently establish the five obligatory prayers as prescribed – especially the middle prayer: ‘Asr – and stand before Allaah with obedient devotion))**.⁴ Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) warned us against forsaking prayers in his statement, “Do not deliberately forsake any obligatory prayer. If anyone deliberately forsakes prayer, he is no longer entitled to any promise of protection from Allaah.” [hasan] This was collected by ibn Maajah. Even in the last moments of his life, the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection)

¹ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):45.

² Soorah al-Mu’minoona (23):9, Soorah al-Ma’aarij (70):34.

³ Soorah al-Ma’aarij (70):23.

⁴ Soorah al-Baqarah (2):238.



gave the instruction to persevere in maintaining obligatory prayers and to beware of falling short in any way when performing them.

The preceding are invaluable authentically established admonitions and words of counsel. However, in our time, there are many who are heedless of them. Prayers to them are of little weight or importance, and have no place among their priorities or interests. Such people turn away from prayers, forsake them completely, think nothing of the punishment that will be faced by those who abandon obligatory prayers, or – at the very least – give little concern to being consistent in performing them. Allaah, the Most Exalted, censured people who altered His directives in such a manner by saying, **((Then, there succeeded them a people who neglected prayers and followed their own disobedient inclinations. Consequently, they will be cast into the hellfire))**.¹ This is a text which clearly shows that neglecting obligatory prayers is among the major sins which destroy an individual, and there is no scholarly difference about this issue.

Servants of Allaah, what is the matter with certain people who ascribe to Islaam yet they neglect obligatory prayers and they are pleased to live a life that has no true value? How do their souls find peace and their minds find rest when they do not pray? How can they genuinely believe that after this life comes death, and after death comes resurrection, yet they still do not pray? A person without prayer is a body without a soul, and a life without true meaning. A person who neglects obligatory prayers may think that what he does is minor, but it is in fact very grave to Allaah. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy upon him) commented that there is no difference among the scholars of Islaam regarding the fact that deliberately neglecting obligatory prayers is among the gravest of major sins. In fact, the magnitude of its sin to Allaah is even greater than that of murder, theft, adultery, or consuming intoxicants. An individual who deliberately neglects obligatory prayers exposes himself to Allaah's wrath and punishment in both this world and the hereafter. (end of comment)

If you find any of what preceded alarming, you would be even more alarmed when you consider that there are actually certain people who fast but do not pray, and perform Hajj but do not pray. I swear by Allaah that such practices are alarming contradictions.

I say to any individual who desires salvation: you need to pray. I say to any individual who desires to be protected from the hellfire: you need to pray.

I say to anyone who has abandoned prayers: I am speaking you, your mind, your soul, and your feelings. I am offering you sincere and caring words of counsel. Take stock of yourself, be among those who return to Allaah and repent, and hasten to be among those who pray. Do those things before your time runs out and death comes unexpectedly. Otherwise, you will meet Allaah with Islaam being worth nothing to you. The worth your heart gives to Islaam is proportional to the worth it gives to obligatory prayers. Have you not asked yourself about the reason behind the various ills and evils that afflict you? Have you not asked yourself about the anxieties you feel in your soul? Have you not asked yourself about what causes life for you to become unsettled?

A person who does not pray has not given Allaah the reverence that is due to Him. Rather, such a person subjects himself to a pitfall from which he cannot escape by anything other than sincere repentance. It is feared that such a person will have an unfortunate ending unless Allaah blesses him to return to doing what is correct.

A person who does not pray lives in darkness. This is understood from the statement of the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection), "Prayer is light." Therefore, how will a person find light if he does not pray?

¹ Soorah Maryam (19):59.



Servants of Allaah, how could we ever forsake prayer when we know that someone who does so remains distant from his Guardian Lord, has turned away from what provides him with benefit and guidance, has followed shaytaan and his own inclinations, and is then expelled from Allaah's mercy?

Servants of Allaah, how could we ever forsake prayer when we know that when the sinful people of the hellfire are asked about what led them to end up there, the first thing they mention will be nothing besides neglecting prayer. ((**They will reply, "We were not among those who performed the obligatory prayers"**)).¹ They will be punished for that. When such people are called to establish the noblest act of worship, they refuse. ((**When those who persist in their denial are told, "You must humbly bow down to Allaah in prayer", they refuse to bow down out of their arrogance**)).²

Servants of Allaah, how could we ever forsake prayer when we know that someone who neglects prayer breaches the agreement that affords him protection? Allaah's Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) stated, "The guarantee of protection that separates us from them (i.e. people of nifaaq) is the prayer. If someone forsakes it, he commits kufr." [saheeh] This was collected by Ahmad and the compilers of the Four Sunan works.

Servants of Allaah, how could we ever forsake prayer when we know that Allaah, the Most Exalted, stated, ((**Prayer in the correct manner prevents people from immorality and wrongdoing**)).³ How will a person handle himself if he does not pray? How can he protect himself from acts of immorality and wrongdoing when he has nothing to hold him back?

Servants of Allaah, how could we ever forsake prayer when we know that it is among the most effective ways of averting problems, removing adversities, and repelling strife?

After hearing the preceding, a person may say: what you mentioned is sufficient for me to know what will happen to someone who forsakes prayer. How can I return to what is correct after knowing that I have become distant from Allaah by forsaking prayers and being negligent in performing them?

The response is that returning to what is correct is quite simple. So long as you continue doing what is right from now onwards, the reward recorded for you would be for the time you continue doing what is right and even for the time that preceded it. All you have to do is repent to Allaah and sincerely devote yourself to Him. If you do that, He will accept it from you. Therefore, hasten to establish obligatory prayers, and I beseech Allaah to grant you His guidance. Do not despair due to your previous state. There are many who have been lost at some point but then returned to Allaah, and He graciously accepted that from them and blessed them with the best outcome. Today is your chance to take control of yourself and make amends before it is too late. Say to Allaah with sincere resolve, "My Lord, I have returned to You, and I implore You to accept me. I have returned to You, and I implore You to forgive me. I have returned to You, and I implore You to accept my repentance and grant me steadfastness."

Furthermore, there is a promise Allaah has given those who repent to Him and return to His obedience. He said, ((except in the case of those who repent, have sound beliefs, and perform righteous deeds. Allaah will change the sins of those people into righteous deeds, and Allaah is Most Forgiving, Bestower of mercy)).⁴ When you repent to Allaah and return to establishing prayers, you would attain tremendous profit and success: Allaah would wipe away your sins, and also change your sins to righteous deeds. This is an absolutely remarkable blessing from Allaah.

However, matters are not limited that. There is even more that is gleaned and you can ascertain that by asking people who repented, returned to their Lord, and remained consistent in maintaining obligatory prayers. How did their lives change? What happened to the purity of their hearts? What

¹ Soorah al-Mudath-thir (74):42.

² Soorah al-Mursalaat (77):48.

³ Soorah al-Ankaboot (29):45.

⁴ Soorah al-Furqaan (25):70.



happened to the gloom that previously plagued them and the sorrows they used to feel? What degree of peace and acceptance of the truth from Allaah did they subsequently attain?

I say this much and I ask Allaah to forgive myself and all of you.



...Prayer is essentially a fortress that protects a person who submits to Allaah in Islaam. It provides a person with a place to resort, and a firm handle on which to grasp. It is the link between a person and his Lord, it nourishes the soul, it heals wounds, it cures the soul's ills, it fulfils needs, it provides safety to the fearful, and it gives strength to the weak.

I say to all who pray: You have been blessed to be individuals who give importance to prayers. Thus, it is necessary for you to establish them as you were instructed by your Lord, and to also be a light of guidance for others. You should encourage people to pray, remind those who have forsaken prayers about the dangers that lie in remaining that way, think about the consequences for them, and continue wanting good for them. Advise them, provide sound arguments to them, and admonish them in a way that awakens them. Perhaps they will awaken and return to what is correct. Ensure that you make your mission statement **((We admonish them so that your Lord would excuse us from their wrongdoing, so that we fulfil our obligation, and so that they would protect themselves from Allaah's punishment by fulfilling His commands and avoiding His prohibitions))**.¹

If these words reach people who pray, it would be a very beneficial thing for such individuals to use these words to remind others around them who do not pray, such as relatives, neighbours, or acquaintances. Perhaps that would lead them to repent, return to their senses, return to their Lord; and, consequently, attain happiness for themselves and be saved from the hellfire.

Aboo Khallaad (may Allaah have mercy upon him) said, "Whenever there is an individual among a people who treats obligatory prayers lightly, yet they let him be, the beginning of their punishment is that their provisions would decrease."

The responsibility a Muslim has towards prayers is not confined to him performing them consistently. He also bears the additional responsibility of calling others to pray, advising them, and directing them. Allaah instructed His Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection), **((Command your family to establish prayers, and you yourself must patiently persevere in performing them))**.² Allaah also described His Prophet Ismaa'eel by saying, **((He would command his family to establish prayer and give charity, and his Lord was pleased with him))**.³ Therefore, my dear brothers in Islaam, you must strive to use whatever beneficial means you can to remind others about prayer. That may take the form of direct spoken advice, written advice, or by way of various social media platforms. It would be most fitting to strive to have a role in providing people with direction, and to be among those whom Allaah described by saying, **((There must be a group of people among you who call to goodness, tell others to do what is right, and forbid them from doing wrong. Those would be the people who are truly successful))**.⁴

¹ Soorah al-A'raaf (7):164.

² Soorah Taa Haa (20):132.

³ Soorah Maryam (19):56.

⁴ Soorah Aali 'Imraan (3):104.