

The Importance of Prayer Within Its Proper Time

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Allaah the Exalted said:

Indeed the prayer has been enjoined upon the Believers at stated times.[1]

Al-Bukhaaree (rh) said: "At stated (fixed) times. He has set time limits for them"

Abu Amr ash-Shaybaanee said: The owner of this house - and he pointed to the house of Abdullaah (ibn Mas'ood) - said: I asked the Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) 'Which action is most loved by Allaah?' He (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: "Prayer at its proper time." Then he said: What next? He (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: "Righteous conduct towards the parents." Then he said: What next? He (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: "Jihaad in the path of Allaah." He (Abdullaah) said: He informed me with them, If I asked him for more he would have told me more.[2]

The Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) explained in this hadeeth that prayer at its proper time is the the most loved of actions and he (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) put this before righteousness to parents and Jihaad in the path of Allaah. The evidence for this is the use of the particle 'What next'. This particle is used to denote order and this is well known to the people of the arabic language.

Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr said in 'Al-Fath': "Ibn Bazeza said: That which requires looking into is the placement of Jihaad at the forefront of all the actions of the body, as it entails sacrificing ones self, with the exception of having patience upon preserving the obligatory prayers, performing them at their times and also good conduct with ones parents, a matter which is necessary all the time. None can remain patient in being observant of Allaah in this matter except the Siddeeqoon (the truthful) and Allaah knows best."

I say: I will put forward an example which will make clear the intent here:

There is a man immersed in his trade and whatever other engagements it entails and whom Shaytaan has managed to deceive so that he misses the takbeeratul-ihraam(the opening takbeer of the prayer in congregation) or a portion of the prayer in congregation. You come to him with texts about Jihaad in the path of Allaah the Exalted and also stories about the bravery of the Companions (ra). You instill in him the aspiration for Paradise and make him renounce the world. He looks at the world after you have admonished him and he sees it become small and insignificant. He reflects upon the Hereafter and sees it becoming great and awesome in his soul. So he races towards the Garden whose width is as the width of the Heavens and the Earth. He rushes to write his will, he concludes the rights he owes to others and says farewell to his family and loved ones and embarks upon the journey to battle. He is killed as a martyr in the path of Allaah.

If you had not called this man to Jihaad in the path of Allaah, the Exalted but had called him to preserving the prayers, mentioning the texts which cause inspiration and instill fear and the stories which have great effects (upon the soul), what would you have seen from him?

Perhaps he would have responded and cried over what occurred. He would have made firm his

resolution to safeguard the prayers upon their times and perhaps he would manage that for some number of days. But then Shaytaan comes and whispers to him, and his engagements and appointments increase, his commitments and meetings reach high proportions and Shaytaan therefore, obtains from him what he desired. He misses some of the times of prayer and then returns to struggle against his soul in order to help himself against Shaytaan. Then the same thing occurs another time and in this manner he is constantly wrestling with and battling against Shaytaan, five times in every day of his, and life is nothing but days and days...

This is a battle against the soul and the former example is also a battle against the soul. But where does the first type stand when compared to the second? This striving, is striving for a whole lifetime and that striving is only for an hour or perhaps days, months or years. But in either of the two situations I say: In both there is good.

I ask Allaah the Exalted that He makes me amongst those who safeguard the times of prayer and its khushoo' and likewise all of His commands, and that he writes me amongst the martyrs. Indeed He has power over all things.

Mis'ab bin S'ad said: I said to my father: O my father! Do you consider this verse: 'Those who are forgetful in their prayers'[3]. Which of us is not forgetful? Which one of us does not converse with his soul (during the prayers)? He said: That is not what is meant. It refers to the wasting of the (correct) time for prayer. A man plays about, (wasting time in idle talk) until the time for the prayer passes.[4]

Moosa bin Ismaa'eel said: Mahdi narrated from Ghaylaan who narrated from Anas (ra) that he said: I cannot recognise anything (now) which used to be in the era of the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). It was said: The Prayer. He said: Do you not do what you do with regard to the prayer. [5]

He meant delaying it past its proper time.

Uthmaan bin Abi Rawwaad, the brother of Abdul-Azeez said: I heard Zuhree say: I entered upon Anas bin Maalik in Damascus and he was crying. So I said to him: What makes you cry? He said: I do not recognise anything which I used to know except this prayer and this prayer is being wasted/neglected.[6]

Ibn Hajr said in 'Fath ul-Baari': Al-Muhallib said: "And the meaning of 'wasting it' is delaying it past its proper, recommended time, not that they perform it outside its time limit." Ibn Hajr differed with this in his explanation which he mentions in his book and says that the meaning is performing the prayer outside its stated times.

I say: The poet has spoken the truth here:

I said they are both bitter (even) the sweeter of the two is bitter

Anas (ra) wept over this matter and yet what are we doing. What is that thing which is desirable for us to do. Is it not befitting for us that we make the plants to grow with our tears?! Due to our neglect and wasting of the prayer and likewise the rest of Allaah's commands.

Ubaadah bin Saamit (ra) said: I testify that I heard the Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) say: "Allaah Azzawajall has made five prayers obligatory. Whoever beautifies the wudhoo, prays them at their proper times, and completes the rukoo', the sujood and khushoo within them, has a covenant with Allaah that He will forgive him. Whoever does not do that then he has no covenant with Allaah and if Allaah wills He will forgive him and if He wills He will punish him." [7]

Ka'b bin Ujra (ra) said: The Messenger of Allaah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) came to us and we were a group of seven, four of us were freed slaves and the remaining three had not been slaves formerly. Our backs were against the wall of the mosque and he said: "Why are you sitting down?" We said: We were waiting for the prayer. He (Ka'b) said: So he paused for a while, then turned to us and said: "Do you know what your Lord says?" We said: No. He said: "Indeed your Lord says: Whoever performs the prayer at its time, preserves it in this manner constantly, and does not waste it deeming its true worth to be insignificant has a covenant with Me that I shall enter him into Paradise. And whoever does not perform the prayer at its proper time, preserve it in this manner constantly and wastes it considering its true worth to be insignificant has no covenant with me. If I will I shall punish Him and if I will I shall forgive Him." [8]

Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood (ra) said: The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) passed by his companions one day and said to them: "Do you know what your Lord, the Blessed and Exalted says?" They said: Allaah and His Messenger know best. The Messenger said this three times and then said: "By My Power and Magnificence non prays them at their proper times except I will enter Him into Paradise and whoever prays them at other than their times, if I will I shall show mercy to Him and if I will I shall punish him." [9]

Footnotes:

[1] Surah Nisaa 4:103

[2] Reported by Bukhaaree

[3] Surah Maa'oon 107:5

[4] Reported by Abu Ya'laa with a Hasan isnaad and it is also in [Saheeh ut-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb], no. 575.

[5] Reported by Bukhaaree, Chapter: Delaying the Prayer Past its Proper Time.

[6] Reported by Bukhaaree, Chapter: Delaying the Prayer Past its Proper Time.

[7] Reported by Maalik, Abu Daawood, an-Nasaaee and Ibn Hibbaan declared it Saheeh. It is also in [Saheeh ut-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb], no. 396.

[8] Reported by at-Tabaraanee in [Al-Kabeer] and [al-Awsat], by Ahmad and it is also in [Saheeh ut-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb], no. 397.

[9] Reported by at-Tabaraanee in [al-Kabeer] and it is also in [Saheeh ut-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb], no. 398.