

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

خطبة الجمعة

Friday Sermon

*Earning the Night:
Deeds That Reach the Rank of Tahajjud*

DELIVERED AT

Masjid Adam



ŞİFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

Earning the Night

The First Khutbah

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ، وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا، مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ، وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ. أَمَّا بَعْدُ: فَإِنَّ أصدقَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابُ اللَّهِ، وَخَيْرُ الْهَدْيِ هَدْيُ مُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ، وَشَرُّ الْأُمُورِ مُحْدَثَاتُهَا، وَكُلُّ مُحْدَثَةٍ بِدْعَةٌ، وَكُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ، وَكُلُّ ضَلَالَةٍ فِي النَّارِ.

All praise belongs to Allah. We praise Him, we seek His help, and we seek His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil within ourselves and from our sinful deeds. Whomever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whomever He leaves astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, having no partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and His Messenger. To proceed: the truest speech is the Book of Allah, the best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad ﷺ, the worst of affairs are the newly invented matters, every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.

نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ، أَمَّا بَعْدُ: فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ، بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ.

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي * وَيسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي * وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي * يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي *

We praise Him, and we send blessings upon His noble Messenger. To proceed: I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed; in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. My Lord, expand for me my breast, and ease for me my task, and untie the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech.

Sūrah Ṭā Hā (20:25 to 28)

Dear brothers and sisters, **assalāmu ‘alaykum wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh.**

The Treasure of the Night, and a Mercy for the Weak

Dear brothers and sisters, among the most beloved and weightiest acts of worship in all of Islam is the night prayer, the Tahajjud, those quiet units of prayer offered when the world is asleep and a servant rises in the darkness to stand before his Lord. Allah praised its people in the Qur’ān, the Messenger ﷺ called it the most virtuous prayer after the obligatory prayers, and the righteous before us treasured their nights more than the people of this world treasure their gold. Listen to how Allah describes them, the people who tear themselves away from the warmth of their beds for His sake.

تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ *

Their sides part from their beds; they call upon their Lord in fear and in hope, and they spend from what We have provided them.

Sūrah as-Sajdah (32:16)

That is a lofty rank, brothers and sisters, and if we are honest, many of us long for it but struggle to reach it. The body is heavy, the day is exhausting, sleep overpowers the best of intentions, and night after night the alarm is silenced and the bed wins. But here is the beauty of the mercy of Allah. He did not lock the reward of the night behind a single door that only the strongest could open. In His generosity, He scattered other doors throughout our days, ordinary deeds within the reach of every one of us, by which a believer can earn the reward of standing the whole night in prayer. Let me share some of these with you this morning, as a mercy and an encouragement. But let me first say clearly what must be said: these deeds are a gift, not a substitute. They do not replace our obligations, our belief in Allah and His Messenger, our five daily prayers, our fasting, our zakāh, and our Hajj, and they are not an excuse to abandon the night prayer itself. They are extra rope thrown to a struggling servant, not permission to stop swimming.

And why is the night so precious, brothers and sisters, that Allah attached such reward to it and to its substitutes? Because the night is the hour of nearness, when the distractions of the world fall silent and the door of the heavens is opened to the one who calls. The Messenger ﷺ described a descent of our Lord in a manner that befits His majesty, in the last part of every night, with an invitation that should break our hearts with longing.

يَنْزِلُ رَبُّنَا تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا حِينَ يَبْقَى ثُلُثُ اللَّيْلِ الْآخِرِ، فَيَقُولُ: مَنْ يَدْعُونِي فَأَسْتَجِيبَ لَهُ، مَنْ يَسْأَلُنِي فَأُعْطِيَهُ، مَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُنِي فَأَغْفِرَ لَهُ.

Our Lord, Blessed and Exalted, descends every night to the lowest heaven when the last third of the night remains, and He says: Who is calling upon Me, that I may answer him? Who is asking of Me, that I may give him? Who is seeking My forgiveness, that I may forgive him?

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 1145, Muslim 758 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

Every night, brothers and sisters, that invitation goes out, and most of the world sleeps through it. So when Allah grants us the reward of that blessed hour through a simple deed of the day, He is handing us a share of the most precious time that exists, even as our bodies rest. Do not let the size of the deed fool you about the size of the gift.

Pray ‘Ishā’ and Fajr in Congregation

The very first door, brothers and sisters, is one that many of us pass through already without realizing the treasure in our hands. It is the two prayers that bracket the night, ‘Ishā’ and Fajr. These are the two heaviest prayers upon the hypocrite, the two that require us to leave our comfort in the dark of evening and the dark of dawn, and the Messenger ﷺ tied them directly to the reward of the night.

مَنْ صَلَّى الْعِشَاءَ فِي جَمَاعَةٍ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَامَ نِصْفَ اللَّيْلِ، وَمَنْ صَلَّى الصُّبْحَ فِي جَمَاعَةٍ فَكَأَنَّمَا صَلَّى اللَّيْلَ كُلَّهُ.

Whoever prays ‘Ishā’ in congregation, it is as though he prayed half the night, and whoever prays Fajr in congregation, it is as though he prayed the entire night.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** 656 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Reflect on that, brothers and sisters. The one who prays ‘Ishā’ in congregation and then returns for Fajr in congregation is written down as though he stood the whole night in prayer, though he slept soundly in between. There is no easier path to the reward of Tahajjud than this. So for the men who can reach the masjid, let these two prayers in congregation never be taken lightly again, for in them lies a night of worship granted to one who simply answered the call twice.

And consider, brothers and sisters, that these two prayers are also the very prayers the hypocrites found heaviest, for the Messenger ﷺ said that no prayers are more burdensome upon them than Fajr and ‘Ishā’, and that if they knew the reward in them, they would come even crawling. The believer crosses the dark to the masjid for ‘Ishā’ and rises again for Fajr, and in that small struggle against his

own comfort, Allah grants him what others seek through the whole night. It is a trade no one of sound mind would refuse.

Let the Qur'ān Keep You Company at Night

The second door is the Book of Allah. A believer who lets the Qur'ān fill even a small part of his night is given a reward far beyond the few minutes it costs him. The Messenger ﷺ said that a measured portion recited at night lifts a person into the ranks of the devout.

مَنْ قَرَأَ بِمِائَةِ آيَةٍ فِي لَيْلَةٍ كُتِبَ لَهُ قُنُوتُ لَيْلَةٍ.

Whoever recites a hundred verses in a night, it will be recorded for him as the devotion of an entire night.

Source: Musnad Ahmad **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

A hundred verses, brothers and sisters, take only about ten minutes to recite, no more than the time we lose scrolling without thought before sleep. And if sleep should overtake us before we manage it, the mercy is wider still, for the Prophet ﷺ taught that the one who sleeps through his night portion and recites it between Fajr and Dhuhr is recorded as though he recited it in the night. And there is a portion so short that no one has an excuse to leave it: the last two verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

مَنْ قَرَأَ بِالْآيَتَيْنِ مِنْ آخِرِ سُورَةِ الْبَقَرَةِ فِي لَيْلَةٍ كَفَتَاهُ.

Whoever recites the last two verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah at night, they will suffice him.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 5009, Muslim 807 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqu 'Alayh

Imām an-Nawawī explained that they will suffice him carries many meanings: it is said they suffice him in reward as the standing of the night, and that they suffice him as a protection from Satan, and that they suffice him against every harm, and it is likely that the hadith intends all of these at once. Two short verses, brothers and sisters, recited from the pillow as our eyes grow heavy, and we are given the reward of the night and a shield until morning. Who among us would let such a treasure pass?

Stand the Nights of Ramaḍān with the Imam

And there is a door that opens for us every year, brothers and sisters, in the blessed month of Ramaḍān: the Tarāwīḥ prayer behind the imam. Many of us pray a portion and then slip away to rest, but the Messenger ﷺ gave a glad tiding to the one who simply stays until the imam finishes.

مَنْ قَامَ مَعَ الْإِمَامِ حَتَّى يَنْصَرِفَ كُتِبَ لَهُ قِيَامُ لَيْلَةٍ.

Whoever stands in prayer with the imam until he departs, the standing of a whole night is recorded for him.

Source: Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī **Hadith No:** 806 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

So whoever prays the Tarāwīḥ behind the imam from beginning to end, brothers and sisters, until the imam leaves, is written down as having stood the entire night in prayer, though he was home and asleep before midnight. What a mercy it is that Allah grants us, every Ramaḍān, an entire month of recorded nights through a prayer we offer in congregation in the early part of the evening. Let no one of us, in the month to come, hurry away from the imam and leave behind the reward of a full night of standing.

Beautiful Character: Worship That Never Sleeps

The third door does not require us to wake at all, for it is woven into how we live every waking hour. It is good character. The Messenger ﷺ told us that the believer, simply by the beauty of his manners, climbs to the rank of the one who fills his nights with prayer and his days with fasting.

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَيُذْرِكُ بِحُسْنِ خُلُقِهِ دَرَجَةَ الصَّائِمِ الْقَائِمِ.

Indeed, a believer attains, by his good character, the rank of one who fasts by day and stands in prayer by night.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd **Hadith No:** 4798 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

What a door this is, brothers and sisters, open at every moment of the day. Your patience when you are provoked, your gentleness with your family, your honesty in your dealings, your forgiveness of the one who wronged you, your smile in the face of a brother, every one of these is quietly building for you the reward of the worshipper of the night. The one who masters his character worships Allah in the marketplace, in the home, and in every conversation, long after the people of the night have finished their prayer.

And there is a deep wisdom in this, that Allah would equate good character with the night prayer. For the one who stands at night struggles against his own body and his own sleep, and the one who keeps beautiful character struggles against his own ego, his anger, and his pride. Both are a jihād against the self, and both are heavy upon the soul, and so Allah, in His justice, joined them in reward. The person who holds his tongue when he longs to lash out, who forgives when he is able to take revenge, who stays gentle when he is exhausted, is fighting the same inner battle as the one who rises in the cold dark to pray, and he is given a share in the same crown.

Caring for the Widow and the Orphan

The fourth door is service to those whom the world overlooks, the widow who lost her support and the orphan who lost his shelter. The Messenger ﷺ raised the one who strives for them to a rank that should astonish us.

السَّاعِي عَلَى الْأَرْمَلَةِ وَالْمِسْكِينِ كَالْمُجَاهِدِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، أَوْ الْقَائِمِ اللَّيْلَ الصَّائِمِ النَّهَارَ.

The one who strives on behalf of the widow and the poor is like the one who fights in the path of Allah, or like the one who stands in prayer by night and fasts by day.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 5353, Muslim 2982 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

This is not a distant or difficult deed, brothers and sisters. Perhaps there is a widowed aunt in your own family, an elderly neighbour with no one to run her errands, an orphan whose school fees you could quietly cover. By tending to her needs, you gain the reward of the warrior in the path of Allah and the worshipper who stands the night, and along with it the reward of keeping the ties of kinship, a bond that the Prophet ﷺ said extends a person's life and increases his provision. One act of quiet kindness, and so many of Allah's rewards are gathered into a single hand.

Every Step You Take to Jumu‘ah

And the fifth door, brothers and sisters, is the very gathering we are sitting in at this moment. The Friday prayer is not merely an obligation to be discharged; for the one who prepares for it and comes early, every single step is weighed against an extraordinary reward.

مَنْ غَسَلَ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ وَاغْتَسَلَ، ثُمَّ بَكَرَ وَابْتَكَرَ، وَمَشَى وَلَمْ يَرْكَبْ، وَدَنَا مِنَ الْإِمَامِ فَاسْتَمَعَ وَلَمْ يَلْغُ، كَانَ لَهُ بِكُلِّ خُطْوَةٍ عَمَلُ سَنَةٍ، أَجْرُ صِيَامِهَا وَقِيَامِهَا.

Whoever washes and performs ghusl on Friday, then comes early, draws near to the imam, listens and stays silent, will have for every step the reward of a year, the reward of its fasting and its night prayer.

Source: Jāmi‘ at-Tirmidhī **Hadith No:** 496 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Consider the magnitude of this, brothers and sisters. Not the reward of a day of fasting and night prayer for each step, nor a week, nor a month, but the fasting and the night prayer of an entire year for every single step taken toward the masjid on Friday by the one who came early, sat close, listened, and kept silent. Count the steps from your car to this seat and ask yourself what you have just earned, and let it change how you come to Jumu‘ah for the rest of your life: washed, early, near, and silent.

And the rewards of that early arrival do not stop there. In another narration the Messenger ﷺ described the one who comes in the first hour as one who has offered a great sacrifice in the path of Allah, the next as a lesser sacrifice, and so on, while the angels stand at the doors of the masjid recording who entered first, until the imam rises to speak and the records are folded away. So the one who treats Jumu'ah as a treasure to be reached early, rather than a duty to be caught at the last moment, is gathering reward upon reward before the khutbah has even begun. How many of these blessings have slipped through our fingers simply because we arrived as the iqamah was called?

Even the Sincere Intention That Sleep Overtook

And I have saved the most tender mercy for last, brothers and sisters, a door that opens for the one who tried and failed. How often have we gone to bed promising ourselves that tonight we will rise for Tahajjud, only for sleep to steal the night away? We wake in the morning feeling we have lost. But the Messenger ﷺ revealed that Allah does not let the sincere intention go to waste.

مَنْ أَتَى فِرَاشَهُ وَهُوَ يَنْوِي أَنْ يَقُومَ فَيُصَلِّيَ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ، فَغَلَبَتْهُ عَيْنُهُ حَتَّى أَصْبَحَ، كُتِبَ لَهُ مَا نَوَى، وَكَانَ نَوْمُهُ صَدَقَةً عَلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ.

Whoever goes to his bed intending to rise and pray in the night, then his eyes overcome him until morning, what he intended is recorded for him, and his sleep is a charity given to him from his Lord.

Source: Sunan an-Nasā'ī **Hadith No:** 1787 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Reflect on the generosity of this, brothers and sisters. The servant intended good, his body failed him, and not only is he forgiven, he is written down as having prayed what he intended, and his very sleep is turned into a gift of charity from his Lord. This is the Allah we worship, the One who rewards us even for the good we longed to do but could not. So let no night pass without the sincere intention to rise, for even if sleep defeats us, the intention itself is written in our favour.

I say these words of mine, and I seek the forgiveness of Allah for me and for you, so seek His forgiveness, for indeed He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلَكُمْ فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.

I say this statement of mine, and I seek the forgiveness of Allah for myself and for you, so seek His forgiveness, for He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

The Second Khutbah

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى أَشْرَفِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ، نَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ
وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ. اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مُجِيدٌ.

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the noblest of the Prophets and Messengers, our Prophet Muḥammad, and upon his family and all his Companions. O Allah, send blessings upon Muḥammad and upon the family of Muḥammad as You sent blessings upon Ibrāhīm and upon the family of Ibrāhīm. Indeed, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.

A Reminder Carried Home

Dear brothers and sisters, in the first khutbah we learned that Allah, in His vast mercy, opened many doors by which a struggling believer can earn the reward of standing the whole night in prayer: praying ‘Ishā’ and Fajr in congregation, reciting a portion of the Qur’ān at night and the last two verses of al-Baqarah, beautifying our character, caring for the widow and the orphan, walking early to Jumu‘ah, and even the sincere intention that sleep overtook. Let us remember the warning that came with these glad tidings: they are a mercy and an encouragement, never a replacement for our obligations nor an excuse to abandon the night prayer itself. With that firmly in mind, let us make a plan.

A Plan to Earn the Night

Choose a few of these doors, brothers and sisters, and hold to them with consistency, for the most beloved deeds to Allah are those done regularly even if they are small. Resolve to guard ‘Ishā’ and Fajr in congregation, and you have secured the reward of the night already. Make the last two verses of al-Baqarah a fixed habit upon your pillow every single night, never sleeping without them. Add to that the four units of sunnah before Dhuhr, which the Prophet ﷺ likened in reward to praying in the hour before dawn, and through which the gates of heaven are opened at midday. Pour your effort into your character, into your patience and your kindness, knowing it is worship that never sleeps. Find one widow, one orphan, or one struggling relative and quietly carry some of their burden. And come to this masjid on Friday washed and early, counting your steps as years of worship. Not one of these requires you to be a saint. They require only that you understand what is in your hands and refuse to let it slip away.

But Do Not Abandon the Night Itself

And yet, brothers and sisters, let none of us hear these glad tidings and quietly decide to give up on the night prayer altogether, content with its substitutes. The substitutes are a mercy for our weakness, not a reward for our laziness. The sweetness of standing before Allah in the depth of the night, when He descends to the lowest heaven and asks who is calling upon Him that He may answer, is a sweetness that nothing else can replace. So let us still reach for it, even if only with two short units once a week, even if only for a few minutes before Fajr. Go to your bed each night with the firm intention to rise, take whatever portion of the night Allah grants you, and trust that even if sleep defeats you, the One who records intentions has already written your reward.

Closing Du‘ā

Dear brothers and sisters, let us raise our hands to the Lord of the night and the day. O Allah, awaken our hearts to Your worship and make us among those whose sides part from their beds to call upon You. O Allah, where our bodies are weak, accept from us the deeds of the day, and where we struggle to rise, do not deprive us of the reward of the night. O Allah, make us constant in ‘Ishā’ and Fajr, companions of Your Book by night, beautiful in our character, and gentle to the widow and the orphan. O Allah, accept our sincere intentions even where our deeds fall short, and write us among the devout. O Allah, forgive us and our parents and have mercy upon them as they raised us when we were small. O Allah, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us steadfastness until we meet You. Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire.

The Final Reminder

Remember the command of your Lord, the command of justice and excellence with which Allah closes the affair.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ
يَعْظُمُ لَعَنُكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ *

Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and He forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression. He admonishes you that you may take heed.

Sūrah an-Naḥl (16:90)

So remember Allah, the Most Great, and He will remember you. Thank Him for His favours and He will increase you. And establish the prayer.

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ