

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

خطبة الجمعة

Friday Sermon

*The Importance of Salah: The
Pillar of the Religion*

DELIVERED AT

Masjid Adam



ŞİFAH

SCHOOL OF ISLAMIC
FOUNDATIONS &
ADVOCACY FOR HUMANITY

The Importance of Salah: The Pillar of the Religion

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 * وَيَسِّرْ 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 Pillar Upon Which Everything Rests

Imagine a house, beautiful from the outside, with strong walls and a fine roof and rooms filled with everything a person could want. Then imagine that the central pillar holding up that roof has been quietly removed. The walls may stand for a while, and the rooms may still look inviting, but the house is already finished, and the first true test will bring it down upon the heads of those inside. Brothers and sisters, our religion is that house, and the prayer is that central pillar. The Prophet ﷺ told us so plainly, that the head of the matter is Islam and its pillar is the prayer, and a roof cannot stand when its pillar is gone.

There is no act of worship in our religion that Allah has emphasised the way He emphasised the salah. He did not reveal its command through an angel descending to the earth, as He did with every other obligation. He raised His Messenger ﷺ above the seven heavens on the Night of the Ascension and gave him the command of the prayer directly, without intermediary, as if to engrave upon the heart of this Ummah that nothing in their lives would carry the weight of this one duty. It is the first matter a servant will be questioned about when he stands before his Lord, the last advice that left the lips of the Prophet ﷺ as his soul was departing, and the single line that separates belief from disbelief. This morning we will sit with the prayer together, what it means, how the Qur'an commands it, how the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions guarded it, and how it must shape the rhythm of our days, our phones, our work, and our homes.

We pray every day. For many of us the prayer has become so familiar that it passes like a habit, performed quickly between tasks, the body present while the heart is in the marketplace. Yet this same prayer, performed by the same limbs, can be the heaviest deed on the scale or the emptiest motion of the day, and the difference lies entirely in how we understand it and how we guard it. So let us renew our understanding, for the heart that knows the worth of the prayer prays differently from the heart that does not.

The Command in the Book of Allah

Allah, the Most High, did not leave the prayer as a recommendation that the strong may take and the weak may leave. He commanded it directly, repeatedly, and with the firmest of words. Among the most striking is His command to guard the prayers as a man guards a treasure he fears to lose. He said:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ *

Guard strictly the prayers, especially the middle prayer, and stand before Allah devoutly obedient.

Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:238)

Reflect on the word Allah chose, guard. He did not merely say pray. He said guard the prayers, the way one guards a trust, watching its times, protecting it from neglect, defending it against the thousand distractions that would steal it away. Al-Qurṭubī, may Allah have mercy on him, notes in his Tafsīr that this guarding includes preserving the prayer in its proper time, with its conditions, its bowing, and its prostration, performed with presence of heart and not as a body going through motions. The believer treats the prayer as the most precious appointment of his day, because he knows it is an appointment with his Lord.

Then Allah revealed the secret of why the prayer matters so deeply, that it is not only a duty we owe but a protection we are given. He said:

قُلْ مَا أَوْحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ *

Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish the prayer. Indeed, the prayer restrains from immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows that which you do.

Sūrah al-‘Ankabūt (29:45)

Look at the promise inside this verse, brothers and sisters. The prayer restrains from immorality and wrongdoing. This is not a vague reward in the distant Hereafter. It is a change in the worshipper here and now. The scholars of tafsīr explain that the prayer performed truly, with its meanings present in the heart, builds within a person a barrier against sin, because a man who stands before Allah five times a day, declaring His greatness and seeking His help, cannot easily walk out of the masjid and into the very disobedience he just renounced. Ibn Kathīr mentions the report that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ complaining of someone who prayed yet still committed wrong, and he said that his prayer will, in time, restrain him, for the prayer that does not restrain its owner from sin is a prayer in which something is missing. The remedy, then, is not to abandon the prayer but to deepen it.

And Allah revealed the deepest purpose of the prayer of all, that it is the appointed means by which the servant remembers his Lord. When He spoke to Mūsā at the sacred valley, before any law of war or wealth or society, He gave him the prayer and tied it to remembrance. He said:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي *

Indeed, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish the prayer for My remembrance.

Sūrah Ṭā Hā (20:14)

Establish the prayer for My remembrance. This is the heart of the matter. The prayer is not a tax we pay to be left alone. It is the doorway through which the servant returns, again and again across the hours of his day, to the remembrance of the One who made him. A human heart left without that return grows hard and forgetful and restless. The prayer is the mercy by which Allah keeps the door open.

The Portrait of the Successful Believer

It is a remarkable thing that when Allah described the believers who will inherit Paradise, He opened and closed the description with the prayer, as though it were the frame around the entire picture. He began the chapter of the Believers with these words:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ *

Successful indeed are the believers: those who are humbly submissive in their prayer.

Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23:1 to 2)

The very first quality of the successful believer, before charity, before guarding the tongue, before fulfilling trusts, is khushū' in the prayer, a humble submission of the heart and the limbs before Allah. Then, after listing the other qualities of the believers, Allah returned to the prayer to seal the description:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ * أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ * الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ *

And those who carefully guard their prayers. It is they who will be the inheritors, who will inherit Paradise, abiding therein eternally.

Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23:9 to 11)

Notice the frame, brothers and sisters. The description of the people of Paradise opens with khushū' in the prayer and closes with the guarding of the prayer. As-Sa'dī, may Allah have mercy on him, observed that Allah singled out the prayer twice, at the beginning with its inward spirit and at the end with its outward consistency, because the prayer is the foundation upon which all other acts of worship are built, and the one who establishes it well will establish the rest of his religion well. So when you ask yourself how your share of Paradise looks, do not first ask about your wealth or your reputation. Ask first about your prayer.

Revealed Above the Seven Heavens

Of all the obligations of Islam, Allah singled out the prayer for an honour given to no other. Every other command came down to the earth, but the command of the prayer was given to the Prophet ﷺ in the highest place a human being has ever reached, on the night he was carried from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque and then raised through the heavens to a station near his Lord. There, the prayer was made obligatory, first as fifty prayers in the day and night, until the Prophet ﷺ, returning again and again at the counsel of Mūsā, asked his Lord to lighten the burden upon his Ummah, and Allah reduced them to five in deed while preserving the reward of fifty. This is recorded in the two most authentic books of hadith.

هَنَ خَمْسٌ وَهَنَ خَمْسُونَ، لَا يَدُلُّ الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ.

They are five, yet they are fifty. The word with Me is not changed.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, from the hadith of the Night Journey **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 349, Muslim 162 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

Pause at the mercy in this, brothers and sisters. Allah, in His generosity, made the deeds five so that we could carry them, and kept the reward fifty so that we would lose nothing. The one who guards his five daily prayers is recorded as one who offered fifty. And consider what this teaches us about the rank of the prayer itself. Allah did not entrust its command to Jibrīl to bring down, as He did with the laws of fasting, charity, and pilgrimage. He summoned His beloved Messenger ﷺ to the highest heaven to receive it directly. A gift handed to you in the throne room of a king is not like a message left at your door. The prayer is the gift Allah handed to this Ummah in His own presence.

This is why the prayer stands as the second pillar of the religion, named immediately after the testimony of faith itself. The Prophet ﷺ built the whole of Islam upon five supports, and he placed the prayer first among the deeds.

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ: شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ، وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ، وَحَجِّ الْبَيْتِ، وَصَوْمِ رَمَضَانَ.

Islam is built upon five: the testimony that there is no deity except Allah and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the prayer, giving the zakāt, pilgrimage to the House, and fasting Ramadan.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, from Ibn ‘Umar **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 8, Muslim 16 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

After the words of faith that enter a person into Islam, the very first deed the Prophet ﷺ named was the prayer. It comes before zakāt, before fasting, before pilgrimage. A person may be too poor to give zakāt, too weak to fast, or unable to travel for Hajj, and his religion remains intact. But there is no day

and no night in which a sane, mature Muslim is excused from the prayer. Even in sickness he prays sitting, and if he cannot sit he prays lying down, and if he cannot move his limbs he prays with the gestures of his eyes and the intention of his heart. The prayer leaves the believer only when the soul leaves the body.

The River at Your Door

If the prayer were only a duty, that alone would be enough reason to guard it. But Allah, in His mercy, made it a gift to the one who performs it, a daily washing of the soul. The Prophet ﷺ gave us an image that no one who hears it ever forgets. He asked his Companions a question:

أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَوْ أَنَّ نَهْرًا بِبَابِ أَحَدِكُمْ يَغْتَسِلُ مِنْهُ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ خَمْسَ مَرَّاتٍ، هَلْ يَبْقَى مِنْ دَرْنِهِ شَيْءٌ؟ قَالُوا: لَا يَبْقَى مِنْ دَرْنِهِ شَيْءٌ. قَالَ: فَذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الصَّلَوَاتِ الْخَمْسِ، يَمْحُو اللَّهُ بِهِنَ الْخَطَايَا.

What do you think, if there were a river at the door of one of you in which he bathed five times every day, would any dirt remain on him? They said, No dirt would remain on him at all. He said, That is the likeness of the five prayers. Through them Allah wipes away sins.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, from Abū Hurayrah **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 528, Muslim 667
Authenticity: Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

Imagine it, brothers and sisters. A clear river running past your very doorstep, and five times a day you step into it and emerge clean. This is what the five prayers do to the soul. We sin throughout the day with the eye, the tongue, the hand, and the heart, and the dust of those sins settles upon us. Then the prayer comes, and we wash. The Prophet ﷺ also taught that the five daily prayers, and one Friday to the next, and one Ramadan to the next, are an expiation for the sins committed between them, so long as the major sins are avoided. So the believer who guards his prayers walks through life being cleansed again and again, never allowing the dust to harden into a wall between himself and his Lord.

And the cleansing does not stop at the prayer itself. Every step taken toward the masjid is recorded, every step raising the worshipper a degree and erasing from him a sin. The Prophet ﷺ taught that whoever purifies himself in his house and then walks to one of the houses of Allah to perform an obligation of Allah, one of his steps wipes away an error and the other raises him a rank. There were Companions whose houses were far from the masjid, and when they were urged to move closer, they refused, because they wished every footstep to the prayer to be written for them. Brothers and sisters, in our age of cars and convenience, we have lost something of this. The believer who walks to the masjid is not wasting time. He is gathering treasure with every step.

To Establish the Prayer, Not Merely to Perform It

There is a distinction in the Book of Allah that we must not pass over, brothers and sisters. When Allah commands the prayer, He rarely says simply to pray. Again and again He says to establish the prayer, *aqīmū aṣ-ṣalāh*, and the scholars of *tafsīr* tell us this is no accident of language. Ibn Kathīr, may Allah have mercy on him, explains that to establish the prayer means to perform it complete in its times, its conditions, its bowing and prostration, with humility and presence of heart and upon the way taught by the Messenger ﷺ. A man may perform a prayer and yet not establish it, the way a man may build a wall that does not stand straight. The body bows and rises, but the prayer is hollow, drained of the very thing that gives it weight before Allah.

This is why the Prophet ﷺ warned us of a kind of theft that takes place inside the prayer itself, a theft committed not against another person but against one's own worship. He described the worst of thieves as the one who steals from his prayer, and when they asked how a man steals from his prayer, he said that he does not complete its bowing and its prostration, hurrying through it like a bird pecking at seed. How many prayers are offered each day that the angels carry up rolled like a worn out garment, because the one who prayed gave them neither stillness nor heart? And how many short prayers, offered slowly and with a present heart, rise like light? The lesson is clear: it is not the number of our prayers alone that Allah weighs, but their truth.

Consider too what Allah promises the one who guards even the hardest of the prayers, the two at the edges of the day when sleep and work pull hardest against us. The Prophet ﷺ said that whoever prays the two cool prayers will enter Paradise, meaning Fajr and 'Aṣr, the prayer of the cold dawn and the prayer in the heat of the afternoon, the two that are heaviest upon the body and the schedule. Allah tied the Garden itself to the prayers we are most tempted to neglect.

مَنْ صَلَّى الْبَرْدَيْنِ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ.

Whoever prays the two cool prayers will enter Paradise.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, from Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 574, Muslim 635 **Authenticity:** Muttafaqun 'Alayh

And He attached an honour to the simple act of attending the masjid morning and evening that should make every step feel light. The Prophet ﷺ said that for whoever goes to the masjid in the morning and the evening, Allah prepares for him a hospitality in Paradise each time he goes. Brothers and sisters, picture a place of honour in the Garden being prepared for you anew with every single journey to the prayer. We pour our energy into appointments that fade and meetings that are forgotten by nightfall. Here is an appointment that builds an eternal home.

مَنْ غَدَا إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ أَوْ رَاحَ، أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُ فِي الْجَنَّةِ نَزْلًا كُلَّمَا غَدَا أَوْ رَاحَ.

Whoever goes to the masjid in the morning or the evening, Allah prepares for him a hospitality in Paradise every time he goes in the morning or the evening.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, from Abū Hurayrah **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 662, Muslim 669
Authenticity: Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

The First Question on the Day of Judgement

When we stand before Allah on the Day of Resurrection, stripped of wealth and rank and every excuse, the very first deed about which we will be questioned is the prayer. Not our charity, not our fasting, not our dealings with people, but the prayer. The Prophet ﷺ told us:

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ مَا يُحَاسَبُ بِهِ الْعَبْدُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ صَلَاتُهُ، فَإِنْ صَلَحَتْ فَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ وَأَنْجَحَ، وَإِنْ فَسَدَتْ فَقَدْ خَابَ وَخَسِرَ.

Indeed, the first deed for which the servant will be brought to account on the Day of Resurrection is his prayer. If it is sound, he has succeeded and prospered, and if it is corrupt, he has failed and lost.

Source: Sunan at-Tirmidhī, from Abū Hurayrah **Hadith No:** Tirmidhī 413 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ (graded Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albānī)

Reflect on the wisdom of this order. The prayer is examined first because it is the measure of everything else. The same hadith continues that if anything is found lacking in a servant's obligatory prayers, Allah will say to look whether His servant has any voluntary prayers, and the shortfall in the obligatory will be completed from the voluntary. This is the mercy of our Lord, that He left a door open through the optional prayers to repair the gaps in the obligatory ones. So the one who prays not only his five but adds to them the sunnah prayers and the night prayer is building a reserve for the Day when the accounting is exact and there is no time left to earn. Ask yourself, brothers and sisters, when my prayer is weighed first of all, what will it say about me? Will it stand as a witness for me or against me?

The Line Between Faith and Disbelief

Of all that the Prophet ﷺ said about deeds, there is no deed he placed at the very border of belief except the prayer. He did not say this of any other act of worship. He made the prayer the line that separates the believer from the one who has left the fold. He said:

بَيْنَ الرَّجُلِ وَبَيْنَ الشِّرْكِ وَالْكُفْرِ تَرْكُ الصَّلَاةِ.

Between a man and shirk and disbelief stands the abandonment of the prayer.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, from Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh **Hadith No:** Muslim 82 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

And he made it the covenant, the binding promise, between the believers and their Lord, so that breaking it is a betrayal of the deepest kind. He said:

الْعَهْدُ الَّذِي بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمُ الصَّلَاةُ، فَمَنْ تَرَكَهَا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ.

The covenant between us and them is the prayer. Whoever abandons it has disbelieved.

Source: Sunan at-Tirmidhī, from Buraydah **Hadith No:** Tirmidhī 2621 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ (graded Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albānī)

The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ understood the prayer in exactly this way, that to leave it was to leave the religion itself. ‘Abdullāh ibn Shaqīq, one of the Followers, narrated that the Companions of Muḥammad ﷺ did not consider the abandonment of any deed to be disbelief except the abandonment of the prayer. This was their consensus, the people who learned the religion directly from the Messenger ﷺ. How far this is from our age, where a person may go days without prostrating to his Lord and think it a small thing. Brothers and sisters, there is no small matter in the prayer. It is the difference between two destinies.

Let me tell you how seriously the best of this Ummah took the prayer. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, the second Caliph, the conqueror, the man whom Shayṭān feared, was stabbed while leading the people in the Fajr prayer. As he lay bleeding, drifting in and out of consciousness, the people around him were in turmoil. And do you know what was said to revive him? They said to him, the prayer, O Commander of the Believers. And he opened his eyes and said that yes, he would pray, for there is no share in Islam for the one who abandons the prayer, and he prayed while the blood flowed from his wound. A man dying of a mortal wound did not consider himself excused from a single prayer. Compare that, brothers and sisters, to the ease with which we delay our prayers for a phone, a meeting, or a moment of comfort.

And the Prophet ﷺ himself, in the final hours of his life, when the fever was so heavy upon him that he could barely speak and was slipping in and out of awareness, kept returning to a single instruction, repeating it as his most urgent final concern for this Ummah.

الصَّلَاةُ الصَّلَاةُ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ.

The prayer, the prayer, and those whom your right hands possess.

Source: Sunan Abī Dāwūd and Musnad Aḥmad, among the final words of the Prophet ﷺ **Hadith No:** Abū Dāwūd 5156 **Authenticity:** Ṣaḥīḥ

Among the very last words to leave the lips of the most beloved of creation, as his soul was preparing to depart, was the prayer, repeated twice for emphasis. He could have spoken of anything in those final moments. He chose the prayer. If it was his last and most urgent advice to us, how can it be anything less than first and most urgent in our own lives? 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.

Closing of the First Khutbah

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 مَجِيدٌ.

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 saw that the prayer is the pillar of the religion, revealed above the seven heavens and handed to this Ummah directly by Allah. We saw that it is the second of the five pillars, a river at our door that washes us five times a day, the first deed we will be questioned about, and the very line that separates faith from disbelief. We heard how ‘Umar prayed with the blood flowing from his wound and how the prayer was among the final words of the Prophet ﷺ. The danger now is that we admire these meanings for an hour and then return to praying as we always have. So let us turn admiration into a plan, because the prayer is not honoured by feeling, it is honoured by guarding.

A Practical Plan to Guard the Prayer

The first and greatest commitment is to pray the five in their times, deliberately and without delay. Allah described the prayer as a timed prescription upon the believers, fixed to its hours, and the believer arranges his day around it rather than squeezing it into the gaps. When the time enters, let the prayer come first, before the message is answered and before the task is finished, for the one who guards the prayer in its time has guarded the most beloved of deeds. Ibn Mas‘ūd, may Allah be pleased with him, asked the Prophet ﷺ which deed is most beloved to Allah, and the answer placed the prayer above even devotion to parents and striving in His path.

سَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ: أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: الصَّلَاةُ عَلَى وَقْتِهَا. قُلْتُ: ثُمَّ أَيُّ؟ قَالَ: بِرُ الْوَالِدَيْنِ. قُلْتُ: ثُمَّ أَيُّ؟ قَالَ: الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ.

I asked the Prophet ﷺ which deed is most beloved to Allah? He said, the prayer in its time. I asked, then which? He said, dutifulness to parents. I asked, then which? He said, striving in the path of Allah.

Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, from Ibn Mas‘ūd **Hadith No:** Bukhārī 527, Muslim 85
Authenticity: Muttafaqun ‘Alayh

The second commitment, for the men, is the prayer in congregation. The reward of the congregation is not a small addition. The Prophet ﷺ taught that the prayer in congregation surpasses the prayer of a man alone by twenty-seven degrees, and that Allah raises a man a rank and erases a sin with every step he takes toward it. Heaviest of all upon the hypocrites, he said, are the prayers of Fajr and ‘Ishā’, and if people only knew the reward in them they would come to them even if they had to crawl. Whoever prays ‘Ishā’ in congregation has the reward of standing half the night, and whoever prays Fajr in congregation as well has the reward of standing the entire night. Brothers and sisters, how many of us sleep through the reward of a full night of worship that is offered to us for the price of rising and walking to the masjid?

The third commitment is the inward one, khushū‘, the presence of the heart. A prayer can be complete in its outward form and nearly empty in its reward if the heart was wandering throughout. The Prophet ﷺ warned of the worst kind of thief, the one who steals from his own prayer by not completing its bowing and prostration with stillness and presence. So when you enter the prayer, leave the world at the door of the masjid. Stand as though it is your final prayer, recite slowly, understand what you say, and let your heart taste the meaning of standing before the King of all kings. The Prophet ﷺ described the prayer not as a burden he endured but as the comfort of his soul. When the cares of the world pressed upon him, he would say to Bilāl, give the call, comfort us with it, for the prayer was where he found his rest, and Allah placed the coolness of his eyes in it.

وَجُعِلَتْ قُرَّةُ عَيْنِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ.

And the coolness of my eyes has been placed in the prayer.

Source: Sunan an-Nasā’ī and Musnad Aḥmad, from Anas ibn Mālīk **Hadith No:** an-Nasā’ī 3940
Authenticity: Ḥasan (graded Ḥasan by al-Albānī)

The fourth commitment is to fortify the obligatory prayers with the regular sunnah prayers that surround them, for these are the reserve from which our shortfalls are repaired. The Prophet ﷺ promised that whoever prays twelve units of voluntary prayer in the day and night, Allah will build for him a house in Paradise: four before Zuhri and two after it, two after Maghrib, two after ‘Ishā’, and

two before Fajr. And of those, the two units before Fajr he described as better than the world and everything within it. These are short prayers, a few minutes scattered across the day, yet they raise a mansion in the Garden and guard the obligatory prayers like a wall around a treasure.

The fifth commitment is to carry the prayer into the home and to the next generation. The Prophet ﷺ commanded that we teach our children the prayer from the age of seven and train them gently upon it, so that it becomes the heartbeat of their day before the world can teach them to neglect it. Brothers and sisters, a father who guards his own prayer but never wakes his son for Fajr has guarded only half of his trust. Let your home have a rhythm of prayer that your children will remember long after you are gone, so that your prayer continues in their prayer, and your reward continues after your death through the worship of those you raised.

Between Hope and Fear

Let no one leave this place in despair, and let no one leave in false security. Brothers and sisters, perhaps someone here has been heedless of the prayer for years, and the words of this morning weigh heavy upon his heart. To him I say, the door of return is wide open, and Allah is more merciful to His servant than we can imagine. The Prophet ﷺ taught that the one who repents from a sin is like one who never committed it, and there is no prayer missed in the past that cannot be answered by a life of prayer beginning today. Do not let the weight of yesterday keep you from the mercy of today. Stand up, make wuḍū', and pray, and let this Friday be the turning point of your life.

And to the one whose prayer is regular, do not grow complacent, for the Companions, with all their excellence, feared that their deeds might not be accepted. Guard your prayer from the slow theft of habit, from the creeping speed that empties it of meaning, and from the wandering heart that leaves the body bowing while the mind is in the marketplace. The prayer that saves us is the prayer we tend, not the prayer we merely repeat. So let us walk toward our Lord on the two wings of hope and fear, hoping in His boundless mercy and fearing the loss of His pleasure, and may He make our prayer a light for us in this life, in the grave, and on the Day we meet Him.

Closing Du'ā

Dear brothers and sisters, let us raise our hands to the One who hears every call and turns away no sincere servant.

O Allah, make us of those who establish the prayer and guard it, and make our prayer a coolness for our eyes as You made it for Your Prophet ﷺ. O Allah, do not let us be among the heedless, and forgive us for every prayer we delayed, every prayer we rushed, and every prayer in which our hearts were absent. O Allah, set right the affairs of this Ummah, unite the hearts of the Muslims upon truth, and fill our masājīd with worshippers whose hearts are alive. O Allah, relieve the distressed among the believers, heal their sick, settle the debts of the indebted, and grant safety, mercy, and victory to our brothers and sisters who are oppressed and afraid in every land, for You are the All Powerful and they have none besides You.

O Allah, forgive us and our parents, and have mercy upon them as they raised us when we were small, and forgive our brothers and sisters who have passed on before us. O Allah, accept from us our prayers, our fasting, and our standing before You, and overlook our shortcomings. O Allah, grant us beneficial knowledge, hearts that truly fear You, and deeds that are sincere for Your Face alone. O Allah, make the prayer firm in our homes and in the hearts of our children, and let the last of our deeds be the best of them, and the last of our words the testimony that there is no god but 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
يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ 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-Nahl (16:90)

So remember Allah, the Most Great, and He will remember you. Thank Him for His favours and He will increase you. And above all that has been said this morning, establish the prayer.

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ