

## Excellence of performing Prayers in congregation

Imaam al-Nawawee's Riyad-us-Saliheen

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

### Chapter 191

#### The excellence of performing Salaat (Prayers) in congregation

**1064.** Ibn `Umar (*May Allaah be pleased with them*) reported: The Messenger of Allaah (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) said,

**“Salaat in congregation is twenty-seven times more meritorious than a Salaat performed individually.”<sup>1</sup>**

**1065.** Aboo Hurairah (*May Allaah be pleased with him*) reported: The Messenger of Allaah (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) said,

**“A man’s Salaat in congregation is twenty-five times more rewarding than his Salaat at home or in his shop, and that is because when he performs his Wudhoo properly and proceeds towards the mosque with the purpose of performing Salaat in congregation, he does not take a step without being raised a degree (in rank) for it and having a sin remitted for it, till he enters the Masjid. When he is performing Salaat, the angels continue to invoke Blessings of Allaah on him as long as he is in his place of worship in a state of Wudhoo. They say: `O Allaah! Have mercy on him! O Allaah! Forgive him.’ He is deemed to be engaged in Salaat as long as he waits for it.”<sup>2</sup>**

**Commentary:** This Hadeeth tells us that Salaat in congregation is far more in reward than Salaat offered alone. In the preceding Hadeeth it has been held 27 times and in the present, 25 times more rewarding. The reason for this variation offered by some `Ulama' is that at first it was told to the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) 25 times and then it was increased to 27 and he communicated to his Companions what was revealed to him. Some other scholars have linked it with the form, spirit and concentration of the Salaat. The more meticulous one is about its details, the greater will be the reward for it. Another difference of opinion in this respect is regarding the nature of Salaat in congregation. How

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<sup>1</sup> Saheeh al-Bukhaaree and Saheeh Muslim

<sup>2</sup> Saheeh al-Bukhaaree and Saheeh Muslim

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does one become eligible for higher reward? Does he become eligible for it by performing Salaat in congregation anywhere, i.e., at home, in business premises, at an open place, in the desert etc., or in that congregation which gathers in a mosque? Some `Ulama' go with the first opinion while others agree with the second.

Hafidh Ibn Hajar preferred the second view on the grounds that the words occurring in the text of this Hadeeth support this view.

**1066.** Aboo Hurairah (*May Allaah be pleased with him*) reported: A blind man came to the Messenger of Allaah (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) and said: "O Messenger of Allaah! I have no one to guide me to the mosque." He, therefore, sought his permission to perform Salaat (prayer) in his house. He (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) granted him permission. When the man turned away, he called him back, and said, "**Do you hear the Adhan (call to prayer)?**" He replied in the affirmative. The Messenger of Allaah (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) then directed him to respond to it.<sup>3</sup>

**1067.** `Abdullah bin Umm Maktoom, the Mu`adhhdhin (the person who gives the call to prayer) (*May Allaah be pleased with him*) reported: I said to the Messenger of Allaah (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*): "There are many poisonous insects and wild beasts in Al-Madeenah, and I am blind. Please grant me permission to perform Salaat at home." He (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) enquired whether he could hear the call: Hayya `alas-Salah; Hayya `alal-Falah (Come to the prayer, come to the salvation). When he replied in affirmative, the Messenger of Allaah (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) directed him to come (to Masjid) for prayer."<sup>4</sup>

**Commentary:** These two Ahadeeth relate to Ibn Umm Maktoom. In spite of the fact that he was blind, he was not allowed by the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) to perform Salaat at home. The Hadeeth signifies the importance of performing Salaat in congregation in the mosque abundantly clear.

**1068.** Aboo Hurairah (*May Allaah be pleased with him*) reported: The Messenger of Allaah (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) said,

**"By Him in Whose Hand my life is, I sometimes thought of giving orders for firewood to be collected, then for proclaiming the Adhan for Salaat. Then I would appoint an Imaam to**

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<sup>3</sup> Saheeh Muslim

<sup>4</sup> Aboo Daawood

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**lead Salaat, and then go to the houses of those who do not come to perform Salaat in congregation, and set fire to their houses on them.”<sup>5</sup>**

**Commentary:** This Hadeeth and the incident relating to Ibn Umm Maktoom are quoted by such people who hold that those who are physically fit, resident and have no valid reason for not coming to the Masjid for Salaat, for them Salaat in the Masjid (Jama`ah) is a must. Those who do not accept that Salaat in Masjid is obligatory and regard it Fard Kifayah (collective duty, i.e., if one Muslim performs it, the rest of the Muslim community will not be obliged to perform it, and thus will not be deemed sinful for doing so), for them such Ahadeeth refer to the hypocrites who did not come to the Masjid for Salaat. Some people are of the view that it is Sunnah Mu`akkadah (an established Sunnah, hence compulsory) and they take such Ahadeeth for inducement because if performance of Salaat in congregation was obligatory, those who missed it would have been punished by the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*), but we do not find any instance of it in his life. It clearly shows that it is Sunnah. If we go by logic, this view seems to be more correct. But we cannot, at the same time, lose sight of the importance that has been attached to the Salaat in congregation especially the fact that it is 25 times more rewarding than the Salaat offered individually.

- This Hadeeth also tells us that it is permissible to take criminals and sinful people from their homes by surprise.

**1069.** Ibn Mas`ood (May Allaah be pleased with him) reported: He who likes to meet Allaah tomorrow (i.e., on the Day of Requital) as a Muslim, should take care and observe the Salaat when the Adhan is announced for them. Allaah has expounded to your Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) the ways of right guidance, and these (the prayers) are part of the right guidance. If you have to perform Salaat in your houses, as this man who stays away (from the Masjid) and performs Salaat in his house, you will abandon the Sunnah (practice) of your Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*), and the departure from the Sunnah of your Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) will lead you astray. I have seen the time when no one stayed behind except a well-known hypocrite. I also saw that a man was brought swaying (on account of weakness) between two men till he was set up in a row (in the mosque).<sup>6</sup>

**Commentary:** This Hadeeth makes the following four points:

- 1. Emphasis on performing Salaat in congregation.
- 2. The passion of the Companions of the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) for Salaat.

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<sup>5</sup> Saheeh al-Bukhaaree and Saheeh Muslim

<sup>6</sup> Saheeh Muslim

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- 3. Evasion from Salaat with congregation is a practice of hypocrites.
- 4. Inducement for following the Sunnah of the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) because evasion from it is bound to lead one astray.

**1070.** Abud-Darda' (*May Allaah be pleased with him*) reported: I heard the Messenger of Allaah (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) saying,

**“If three men in a village or in the desert make no arrangement for Salaat in congregation, Satan must have certainly overcome them. So observe Salaat in congregation, for the wolf eats up a solitary sheep that stays far from the flock.”<sup>7</sup>**

**Commentary:** This Hadeeth also stresses the importance of offering Salaat in congregation and mentions the disadvantages of offering it individually. One who remains aloof from the congregation, is like the sheep which is separated from its herd and becomes a victim of the wolf. One who lives alone is easily overpowered by satanic doubts.

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<sup>7</sup> Abou Daawood