

Khutba

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English

The Excellence of Performing Salat (Prayers) in Congregation

Ibn `Umar (May Allah be pleased with them) reported: *The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Salat in congregation is twenty-seven times more meritorious than a Salat performed individually."* [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: *The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "A man's Salat in congregation is twenty-five times more rewarding than his Salat at home or in his shop, and that is because when he performs his Wudu' properly and proceeds towards the mosque with the purpose of performing Salat 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 mosque. When he is performing Salat, the angels continue to invoke Blessings of Allah on him as long as he is in his place of worship in a state of Wudu'. They say: `O Allah! Have mercy on him! O Allah! Forgive him.' He is deemed to be engaged in Salat as long as he waits for it."* [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

This tells us that Salat in congregation is far more in reward than Salat offered alone. In the preceding Hadith 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 (PBUH) 25 times and then it was increased to 27 and he communicated to his Companions what was revealed to him.

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: A blind man came to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and said: "O Messenger of Allah! I have no one to guide me to the mosque." He, therefore, sought his permission to perform Salat (prayer) in his house. He (PBUH) 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 Allah (PBUH) then directed him to respond to it. [Muslim].

Abdullah bin Umm Maktum, the Mu'adhdhin (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: I said to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH): "There are many poisonous insects and wild beasts in Al-Madinah, and I am blind. Please grant me permission to perform Salat at

home." He (PBUH) 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 Allah (PBUH) directed him to come (to mosque) for prayer." [Abu Dawud].

These two Ahadith relate to Ibn Umm Maktum. In spite of the fact that he was blind, he was not allowed by the Prophet (PBUH) to perform Salat at home. The Hadith signifies the importance of performing Salat in congregation in the mosque abundantly clear.

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) 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 Salat. Then I would appoint an Imam to lead Salat, and then go to the houses of those who do not come to perform Salat in congregation, and set fire to their houses on them." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

This Hadith and the incident relating to Ibn Umm Maktum are quoted by such people who hold that those who are physically fit, resident and have no valid reason for not coming to the mosque for Salat, for them Salat in the mosque (Jama`ah) is a must. Those who do not accept that Salat in mosque 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 Ahadith refer to the hypocrites who did not come to the mosque for Salat. Some people are of the view that it is Sunnah Mu'akkadah (an established Sunnah, hence compulsory) and they take such Ahadith for inducement because if performance of Salat in congregation was obligatory, those who missed it would have been punished by the Prophet (PBUH), 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 Salat in congregation especially the fact that it is 25 times more rewarding than the Salat offered individually.

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

Ibn Mas`ud (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: He who likes to meet Allah tomorrow (i.e., on the Day of Requital) as a Muslim, should take care and observe the Salat when the Adhan is announced for them. Allah has expounded to your Prophet (PBUH) the ways of right guidance, and these (the prayers) are part of the right guidance. If you have to perform Salat in your houses, as this man who stays away (from the mosque) and performs Salat in his house, you will abandon the Sunnah (practice) of your Prophet (PBUH), and the departure from the Sunnah of your Prophet (PBUH) 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). [Muslim].

This Hadith makes the following four points:

- 1.Emphasis on performing Salat in congregation.
- 2.The passion of the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) for Salat.
- 3.Evasion from Salat with congregation is a practice of hypocrites.
- 4.Inducement for following the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) because evasion from it is bound to lead one astray.

Abud-Darda' (May Allah be pleased with him)reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) saying, "If three men in a village or in the desert, make no arrangement for Salat in congregation, Satan must have certainly overcome them. So observe Salat in congregation, for the wolf eats up a solitary sheep that stays far from the flock." [Abu Dawud].

This Hadith also stresses the importance of offering Salat 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.

Amen.