

Ramadan Daily Quran Studies, compiled by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2026

Derived largely from the writings of Maulana Muhammad Ali

Produced by:

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Study 13: Prayer and action —

Those who prayed most, worked most

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

“Guide us on the right path” — 1:5

- Prayer to God does not mean that we have simply to plead before God to grant us this or that favour and do nothing ourselves towards attaining it.
- Prayer is, in fact, a search for the means with which to achieve something and is thus an incentive to action. The central idea of the *Fātiḥah* is one of action or being led on to action, for here the person praying does not ask for certain favours but only to be guided on the right path.

- Prayer is thus only the means of leading a Muslim onwards and **discovering** the path by walking on which they may attain the goal. Prayer for any purpose does not mean that we do not use human means to achieve it. In the Quran **the acceptance of prayer** is said to be **a reward** for men and women **for hard work** they have done:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّمَّنْ ذَكَرُوا وَأَنْتُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ

“So their Lord accepted their prayer, (saying) I will not let the work of any worker among you to be lost, whether male or female.

Each of you is like the other.”

— 3:195

- The rule has been laid down in the Quran in several places that no end can be gained without making a hard struggle for it, for example:

وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى ﴿٣٩﴾ وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَى ﴿٤٠﴾
ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الْأَوْفَى ﴿٤١﴾

“And that a human can have nothing but what he strives for,
and that his striving will soon be seen,
then he will be rewarded for it with the fullest reward.”

— 53:39–41

- *Question: What is the need for prayer if a person must work for an objective and use the means to reach it?*
- *Answer:* It often happens that, despite the hardest struggle, a person is unable to achieve what they want, and finds themselves totally helpless. In such a case prayer is a help, a source of strength, to the worker.
- They do not lose heart nor do they despair, because they believe that:
 - although the means at their disposal have failed,
 - although all around there are difficulties and darkness,

- although their own strength is failing,

there is a Higher Power:

- with Whom nothing is impossible,
- Who can still bring a ray of light to dispel the darkness, and
- Who remains a perpetual source of strength for them in their helplessness, and
- that by praying to Him they can still achieve what seems otherwise quite unattainable.

- That is the function of prayer, and it is thus one of the means to gain an end when all other means have failed, and a source of strength to a person at all times, but especially in moments of utter weakness and despair.
- The Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his Companions were undoubtedly the greatest believers in prayer. They are spoken of in the Quran as spending two-thirds of the night, half the night or one-third of the night in prayer.
- It is said to the Holy Prophet in the Quran:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ثُلُثِي اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَهُ وَطَآئِفَةٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ مَعَكَ

“Your Lord knows indeed that you pass in prayer nearly two-thirds of the night,
and sometimes half of it, and sometimes a third of it,
as do a group of those with you.”

— 73:20

and yet this was the very band of people whose love for work
knew no bounds, whose energy was inexhaustible and who faced
extreme difficulties with an iron determination.

- In the next verses that we will quote, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was instructed by the Almighty God to pray much at night *because he has too much work to do during the day!*
- He is not advised to rest at night because he has too much work to do during the day. The prayer at night will strengthen him to carry out his mission during the day.
- The Quran says to him:

قُمِ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٢﴾ نِصْفَهُ أَوْ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا ﴿٣﴾ أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا ﴿٤﴾

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا ﴿٥﴾ إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْأً وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا ﴿٦﴾

إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا ﴿٧﴾

“Rise to pray by night except a little,
half of it, or lessen it a little, or add to it,
and recite the Quran at a leisurely pace.

Surely We shall charge you with a weighty word.

The rising (to pray) by night is surely the firmest way to tread
and most effective in speech. Truly you have by day prolonged occupation.”

— 73:2–7

- This voluntary, extra prayer at night gives a person the strength to do the greatest deeds. It makes them morally perfect, and at the same time it gives them strength to make others morally perfect. This is because their words are coming out of a sincere heart which bows to none but God. So they carry conviction to the hearts of others.
- The Prophet ﷺ was doubly strengthened, in his deeds as well as in his prayer, to carry his message to other people, and his true followers should try to get strength in the same way.

- Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad writes as follows about what is prayer:

“When we apply our power of **thinking and pondering** to find a solution, as yet unknown to us, and exert ourselves as if we are trying to remain afloat in a deep ocean, our very state is that of asking help from that Higher Power from Whom nothing is hidden.

Finding ourselves to be helpless, when we use our thinking to find light from outside, **that state is the state of prayer**. It is through this kind of prayer that all knowledge of the world has come into existence.

Our thinking, our pondering, and directing our thoughts to find some hidden solution, all of these are included in prayer.

The spiritual persons in their prayers recognise the Source of all grace (God) and turn to Him knowingly with insight, but those who have no connection with God only apply their thinking and pondering to seek a solution. They too want the solution to enter into their minds from a hidden source, which is also what the spiritual person seeks from God by prayer.

God treats the thinking of the thinker as a prayer, and accepts it and grants him the knowledge he is seeking, even though the thinker does not realise that it is from God.”

(book *Ayyam-us-Sulh*, pages 1–2)

END OF STUDY 13