

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 19: Charity

- The second great pillar on which the structure of Islam stands, as laid down in the Holy Quran, is charity towards fellow human beings. Charity is meant in its widest sense. This is made plain in the very beginning of the Holy Book (2:3–4) where the main principles of Islam, three theoretical and two practical, are laid down.
- The three theoretical essentials are belief in God, in Divine revelation and in the Hereafter; and the two practical essentials are keeping up prayer and spending out of what God has given to us. In the first of the verses mentioned above (2:3), Muslims are described as follows:

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾

“(those) who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer
and spend out of what We have given them.” — 2:3

- Spending out of whatever has been given to us, mentioned here after prayer, stands for charity in a broad sense, i.e., for all acts of benevolence and doing good to humanity in general.
- For what God has given to us is not only the wealth which we possess but all the faculties and powers with which we have been gifted.

- This verse shows the natural order. Belief in the Unseen is the starting point of our spiritual progress. But this would lead to no good if the next step, the seeking of closeness to the Unseen through prayer, does not follow. And this again is meaningless if it does not lead to acts of benevolence.
- Prayer, therefore, is the first step because it leads to the second, that is, charity.

- It is a constant theme of the Holy Quran that benevolence, or the doing of good to others, is one of the two mainstays of religion. For example, while rejecting the Jewish and Christian claims to salvation on the basis of certain beliefs, the Quran says:

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

“No, it is whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and is the doer of good to others, that has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear that will come upon such people nor shall they grieve.”

— 2:112

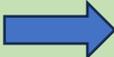
- Comparing this verse 2:112 with the wording of verse 2:3 given earlier:
 - *submission to Allah* in 2:112 stands for *prayer*
 - *doing of good to others* in 2:112 stands for *spending out of what one has been given.*
- When prayer and charity are spoken of together, which is very frequently in the Quran, prayer always comes before charity. This is because prayer is a preparation for the service of humanity.

- The most frequently occurring words for charity in the Quran are:
 - *infāq* which means ‘spending benevolently’,
 - *iḥsān* which means ‘the doing of good’,
 - *zakāt* which means ‘growth’ or ‘purification’, and
 - *ṣadaqah* which is derived from the root *ṣidq*, meaning ‘truth’, and comes to signify a ‘charitable deed’.
- Thus the very words used to denote charitable deeds are an indication of the broadness of its conception.

- The Holy Quran of course lays stress on such great deeds of charity as:
 - the emancipation of slaves (90:13, 2:177),
 - the feeding of the poor (69:34 etc.),
 - taking care of orphans (17:34 etc.)
 - and doing good to humanity in general.
- Not only this, but the Quran gives equal emphasis to smaller acts of benevolence. It is for this reason that the withholding of *small acts of kindness and charity* is stated to be against the spirit of prayer. As the Quran says:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ﴿٤﴾
الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ ﴿٥﴾ وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ ﴿٦﴾

- “Woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayers, who do good to be seen, and refrain from (small) acts of kindness.” — 107:4–7
- Likewise, the use of kind words is recommended as in itself a charitable deed in many places in the Quran, for example 2:83 and 4:8, and the speaking of a kind word to parents is referred to as *ihsān* in 17:2
- Hadith is much more explicit on the acts which constitute charity. To remove from the road anything which may cause hurt is called a *ṣadaqah* or a charitable deed.

- According to another hadith:
 - “There is a *ṣadaqah* (charity) due on every limb (of your body) with every new sun (meaning everyday), and to do justice among people is also a charity.” (Bukhari, hadith 2707).
- Another report in Hadith gives more detail:
 - “On every limb there is an act of charity due every day (i.e., every limb of a person must perform some charitable act every day); a man helps another to ride his animal, it is a charity; or he helps him to load his animal, this is also a charity; and so is a good word; and every step, which a person takes in going to pray, is a charity; 

➔ and to show (someone) the way is a charity.”

(Bukhari, hadith 2891. See also hadith 2989)

- Examples of other charitable deeds in Hadith are “your salutation to people,” “your enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong,” “refraining from doing evil to anyone” and so on.

END OF STUDY 19