

Good News

And give good news to those who do good (to others)

–Holy Quran 22:37

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The Pleasure and Power of Prayer

Compiled by Ebrahim Mohamed

The Holy Quran, after mentioning fasting in the month of Ramadan immediately says, ‘And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, surely I am near. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should hear my call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way.’ – 2:186.

Someone once asked, ‘Why does God want us to worship Him so much?’ ‘Does He really need all of this from us? He is after all the All Powerful, the Mighty, the Self Subsistent?’ The simple answer is, yes, indeed He is. He does not need

us but *we need Him*. If we do not remember Him as often as we can, we will start worshipping those around us - those in positions of power, the wealthy the famous, the rabbis, the priests, the mullas, etc. The Holy Quran mentions in particular nations that started to worship their Pharaohs and their doctors of law. Jesus, for example, contrary to his own teachings, was set up as an object of worship by overzealous followers. Muslims are warned against such behaviour and are taught to ask for guidance in their five daily prayers not to fall into the same path of error.

Prayer in Islam is very much about building a personal relationship with Almighty God, the Unseen, Who is not necessarily

confined to a church, a temple, a mosque, a synagogue or some remote location in heaven. The Holy Quran states that God is **‘With you wherever you are’ - (57:4). And, ‘We are nearer to him than his life-vein.’ – 50:16.** Therefore, although there is merit in participating in congregational prayers, prayers may be said alone in one’s home or in a field. It can be said while standing, sitting, and lying down. There is therefore no excuse for not saying prayers. Prayer serves as a reminder to man that Almighty God is with him everywhere, and all the time. He is like a Companion that never leaves our side. He listens to our prayers whether we say it out aloud or silently. He knows our inner thoughts and what is in the hearts. The five daily prayers remind us of the existence of the Divine Being. It nourishes our faith in Him and lifts the veil off the face of the Unseen.

We are taught not to merely recite prayers superficially but to

‘keep it up’, meaning we should give it our highest attention and concentration. Thus we are reprimanded:

‘So woe to the praying (or reciting ones), who are unmindful of their prayer, who do good to be seen, and refrain from acts of kindness!’ - (107:4-7).

This is a reference to those who perform prayers superficially merely to impress others. Such prayers, we are told, do not inspire any feelings of compassion and kindness towards humankind because the heart in this case is imbued with the love of material wealth, pomp and show rather than with the remembrance of Almighty God, the Beneficent, and the Merciful.

The Holy Quran praises ‘the prayer which is kept up.’ A renowned Muslim saint by the name Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani said, ‘Man is rewarded for the effort he makes *to keep up his prayer.*’ He

was then asked if this reward ends once a person reaches the stage of full concentration in prayer. To this he replied, ‘his prayer then becomes a gift from God, and its reward is the *pleasure and tranquillity* such a person experiences in his prayer.’ That is why when the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) used to ask his companion, Bilal to recite the call to prayer he would say, ‘O Bilal! Arrange for *our pleasure.*’ He also said, ‘**the coolness of my eyes is in prayer.**’

Talking about pleasure to be derived from prayer, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, says¹:

‘There is nothing in the world in which God, the Most High, has not only placed a pleasure, but a distinctive delight, as well. Just as a sick person can derive no enjoyment from a delightfully tasty dish and rather considers it bitter or

tasteless, in the same way, there are those who will find no pleasure in their worship and thus should ponder over their spiritual illness...

...So, if God has created man to worship Him, then what reason is there to doubt that the Almighty has placed joy and ecstasy to be experienced in worshipping Him? The pleasures and delight are indeed there, but there must be someone to enjoy it. Therefore God, Most High, has said: ‘*And I have not created the jinn² and the men except that they should serve Me.*’ (51:56)...

...Now, since man was created to serve God, it is necessary that a high degree of pleasure and delight be vested in acts of worship. Our daily observations and experiences confirm this point. For example, look at the grain and

¹ Recorded in a 10 volume compilation of his discourses called the *Malfuzat*

² In this context Jinn refer to the great rulers and geniuses of this world as opposed to the ordinary people.

all the other things that have been created for man to eat and drink. Does he not derive pleasure and delight from them? Does he not have a tongue in his mouth to enable him to enjoy the feeling of their taste and relish it? Does he not derive pleasure from seeing all those beautiful things, whether they may be vegetables, flowers, minerals, animals or humans? Is his ear not entertained by charming and melodious voices and natural sounds? What further proof do we need to support the fact that there is ecstasy to be derived from worship as well? Thus, I wish to say that you should beseech God with great feeling and fervour so that just as He has bestowed all kinds of delights in fruits and other things, in the same way He should make us taste even once, that sweetness that comes through prayer...

...When man begins to acquire humility and submissiveness in prayer, then one of the consequences is that the love of the material world is extinguished from his heart. This does not mean that he then forsakes necessary duties such as farming, trade and commerce, and other services etc., but he begins to turn away from those worldly pursuits which involve deceit that causes him to deviate from God...

...The love for the faith starts to take precedence over everything else such as the love of this world, its luxury and comfort and his own personal desires, etc., for it is a well-known fact that one good deed attracts another good deed just as one bad deed induces another bad deed...

...So when these people fall in humility and submissiveness in their prayer then the

inevitable result is that they turn away naturally from vanity and they obtain deliverance from this impure world; the love of this material world grows cold and the love of God is born in them. The result of all this is that they selflessly spend in the way of God and this is a natural part of shunning what is futile or vain.’

He then explains by way of a homely parable how God is drawn to a sincere heart that cries out for His help:

‘Behold a child, through hunger, becomes restless and anxious and begins to scream and cry for milk and automatically milk surges in the breasts of the mother. Although the child does not even know the name prayer, yet his screams are the means by which milk is attracted. This experience is a universal one. Many times it has been observed that mothers do not

even feel the presence of milk in their breasts and often there is not any; yet, immediately upon the desperate screams of the child reaching their ears, milk instantly begins to flow as if there is a powerful connection between the cries and the generation of milk. I say with all sincerity that if we display a similar helplessness before Almighty God, then it will stimulate and draw His grace and mercy; and I affirm this on the basis of my own experiences...

...Unless a person has complete trust and perfect confidence in the total and absolute power of God Almighty i.e. that God is the Hearer and Acceptor of prayers, then his prayer is without substance. The reason why there are philosophers (and scientists) that do not believe in the acceptance of prayer is because they do not fully believe in God’s All-

encompassing power and His being the Originator of the minutest of provisions, and they consider His power to be limited, and they rely only on their own experience and knowledge. As compared to their own experiences, the idea never crosses their minds that God exists and that He has power to act. That is why, when some very deadly disease attacks a person, those people pronounce with certainty and finality that the afflicted one cannot be saved, or that he will die after a certain period of time, or will die in such and such a way. But I have personally witnessed many examples and know of many other instances where, despite such conclusive and decisive verdicts, Almighty God provided for the well-being of those afflicted ones and brought about such conditions, that in the end

they were finally healed or rescued..

...Prayer is such a potent weapon which God has provided that a seemingly impossible matter which man considers impossible can actually take place because nothing is impossible with God...

...Man ought to be constantly engaged in prayers to God even when he is not beset by difficulty, for what knowledge does he have of the intentions of God or what may happen tomorrow? He should make supplications to God in advance in order to be saved. Many a time a calamity strikes so suddenly that man has no time to supplicate, so that if he were making supplications before hand, it would return to his benefit when this awry time descends...

...The best time to make supplication is in our (daily)

prayers...more effectively it may be said in the prostration (*sajdah*)...'

He explains why prayers are sometimes not accepted:

'... Look how much a mother loves her child and does not wish any kind of afflictions to befall him. But if the child should foolishly persist and obstinately cry for a sharp knife or a burning piece of charcoal in his hand, do you think that the mother, in spite of her true love and genuine tenderness, will ever allow her child to burn his hand with the lighted coal or to cut his hand by passing it over the sharp edge of the knife? Certainly not! From this point, one can appreciate the fundamental principle of the acceptance of prayer. It is my experience in this matter that if a prayer contains something harmful, it is never granted...

... Unless your heart is clean, your supplications to God will

not be accepted. If in some worldly affair you harbour malice in your heart against another person, your prayers cannot be answered...' - **End of quotes.**

Although the Holy Quran says that God is near to us and answers our prayers and that we should hear His call when He calls on us and that we should believe in Him – 2:186; the question we must ask ourselves is, are we near to Him? Only we know the answer to that question. God indeed answers us but we often do not hear and understand. We will only understand if 'we hear His call and believe in Him.' So what is His call? His call is that we should serve Him and not set up partners with Him. If we do this sincerely, as Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has explained above, then we will hear His call and we will understand His answering our prayers. It will become clear to us and only then our faith in Him will strengthen. Thus we should never lose hope that our prayers and frantic cries like a baby before the

Lord of the Heavens and Earth will not be answered. **The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary** puts it very well in the following parable:

‘For everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!’ – Luke 11: 10 -13

We wish all our Muslim, Jewish, and Christian brothers and sisters well over their forthcoming holy days.

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