

The Virtues of Deeds in the Month of Ramaḍān

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Indeed, all praise and thanks are due to Allāh. We praise Him, we seek His forgiveness, and we seek refuge in Allāh from the evil within ourselves and from the evil consequences of our evil deeds. Whomsoever Allāh guides, none can misguide; and whomsoever He leaves astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allāh alone, without partner; and I bear witness that our Prophet is His servant and Messenger. May Allāh send blessings and peace upon him, his family and his Companions.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

O you who believe! Fear Allāh [by doing all that He has ordered and by abstaining from all that He has forbidden] as He should be feared. [Obey Him, be thankful to Him, and remember Him always], and die not except in a state of Islām [as Muslims] with complete submission to Allāh. [Al-'Imrān 3:102]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person [Ādam], and from him [Ādam] He created his wife [Hawwā' [Eve]], and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allāh through Whom you demand your mutual [rights], and [do not cut the relations of] the wombs [kinship]. Surely, Allāh is Ever an All-Watcher over you. [Al-Nisā' 4:1]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا يُصْلِحُ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا﴾

O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allāh and fear Him, and speak [always] the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allāh and His Messenger, he has indeed achieved a great achievement. [Al-Aḥzāb 33:70-71]

As to what follows:

Indeed, the truest speech is the Book of Allāh, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad ﷺ. The worst of matters are newly introduced ones; every newly introduced matter is an innovation, every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.

Thereafter, dear believers, fear Allāh, dear servants of Allāh, and be mindful of Him in private and in public. For He سبّحه وتعالى has commanded all His servants to have taqwā. He سبّحه said:

﴿وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنْ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ﴾

And verily, We have recommended to the people of the Scripture before you, and to you [O Muslims], that you [all] fear Allāh and keep your duty to Him. [Al-Nisā' 4:131]

Whoever fears Allāh, He will protect him and guide him.

Dear Believers, Allāh سبّحه وتعالى created all of creation for His worship. He said:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

And I [Allāh] created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me [Alone]. [Adh-Dhāriyāt 51:56]

He سبّحه وتعالى has prepared for them seasons and times in which the rewards of deeds are multiplied. Among them, dear believers, is the month of Ramadān – the month in which the Qur’ān was revealed; the finest of times and the marketplace of the people of īmān.

Its fasting is an obligation prescribed by Allāh سبّحه وتعالى: its night prayer is recommended. Its days are numbered and its nights are limited. In it the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of the Fire are closed, and the devils are chained. Souls are elevated, spirits refined, and forgiveness is granted to the one whom Allāh enables during its days and nights.

Regarding its days, the Prophet ﷺ said:

من صام رمضان إيماناً واحتساباً غُفر له ما تقدم من ذنبه

“Whoever fasts Ramadān out of faith and seeking reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.” Narrated by Bukhārī and Muslim.

And regarding its nights, he ﷺ said:

من قام رمضان إيماناً واحتساباً غُفر له ما تقدم من ذنبه

“Whoever stands [in prayer] during Ramadān out of faith and seeking reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.” Narrated by Bukhārī and Muslim.

Dear Believers, indeed Allāh ﷺ prescribed fasting for the previous nations so that they might attain taqwā. He said:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقَوْنَ﴾

O you who believe! Observing As-Ṣaum [the fasting] is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become Al-Muttaqūn [the pious]. [Al-Baqarah 2:183]

Among the important matters, may Allāh preserve you, for the one who desires salvation and to tread the path of the people of righteousness, is to know the guidance of the Messenger ﷺ in his fasting and night prayer, so that he may follow him. For the best guidance is the guidance of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.

Al-Imām Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said: “His guidance ﷺ in the month of Ramadān was to increase in various forms of worship. Jibrīl عليه السلام would review the Qur’ān with him in Ramadān, and when Jibrīl met him, he was more generous in goodness than the sent wind. He was the most generous of people, and even more generous in Ramadān. He would increase in charity, kindness, recitation of the Qur’ān, prayer, remembrance and i‘tikāf. He would single out Ramadān with acts of worship not observed in other months”.

Dear Believers, Ramadān is the month of the Qur’ān, and the Qur’ān guides to Paradise. Allāh ﷺ said:

﴿هَذَا هُدًى﴾

This [Qur'ān] is guidance. [Al-Jāthiyah 45:11]

Its lessons are the greatest lessons; its admonitions the most eloquent; its stories the finest of stories. Allāh ﷺ said:

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولَئِكَ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَى وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

Indeed in their stories, there is a lesson for men of understanding. It [the Qur'ān] is not a forged statement but a confirmation of [Allāh's existing Books] which were before it and a detailed explanation of everything and a guide and a Mercy for the people who believe. [Yūsuf 12:111]

This magnificent Qur'ān is easy in wording and clear in meaning. Allāh ﷺ said:

﴿وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلَّذِكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّذَكَّرٍ﴾

And We have indeed made the Qur'ān easy to understand and remember; then is there any that will remember [or receive admonition]? [Al-Qamar 54:17]

It is abundant in benefit, rich in virtues, a healing for hearts and bodies. Yet the Messenger ﷺ complained to his Lord and Master about those who abandon it:

﴿وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا﴾

And the Messenger [Muhammad ﷺ] will say: "O my Lord! Indeed, my people deserted this Qur'ān." [Al-Furqān 25:30]

Ibn Kathīr رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ explained: "They turned away from it to other speech – poetry, songs, idle talk or other methodologies taken from elsewhere".

Dear Believers, Ramaḍān is the month of repentance, seeking forgiveness and turning back to Allāh. Whoever turns to Allāh, Allāh loves him. He ﷺ said:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ﴾

Truly, Allāh loves those who turn unto Him in repentance. [Al-Baqarah 2:222]

And He ﷺ accepts repentance from His servants and pardons much – at any time, by night or day. In Ramadān, acceptance is even more hoped for, for repentance erases previous sins and transforms evil deeds into good ones. There is no success for a servant except through it [repentance]. Thus, He ﷺ commanded the entire creation with it. As He ﷺ said:

﴿وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

And turn to Allāh in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed. [An-Nūr 24:31]

Ramadān, dear believers, is a month in which one should be especially earnest and persistent in supplication, and in turning to Allāh alone with one's needs and requests. Thus He ﷺ said:

﴿وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ﴾

And your Lord said: "Invoke Me, I will respond to your [invocation]." [Ghāfir 40:60]

He ﷺ commanded supplication and promised a response between the verses concerning fasting, saying:

﴿وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ﴾

And when My slaves ask you [O Muḥammad ﷺ] concerning Me, then [answer them], I am indeed near [to them by My Knowledge]. I respond to the invocations of the suppliant when he calls on Me [without any mediator or intercessor]. [Al-Baqarah 2:186]

Dear Believers, indeed Allāh ﷺ is Most Generous. He fulfils the needs of His servants; His treasures are full, and no spending diminishes them. Allāh ﷺ said:

﴿وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَرَائِفُهُ﴾

And there is not a thing but with Us are the stores thereof. [Al-Ḥijr 15:21]

His generosity ﷺ never ceases due to the abundance of His giving.

﴿مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ﴾

Whatever is with you, will be exhausted, and whatever with Allāh will remain. [An-Nahl 16:96]

He ﷺ loves those who ask of Him. The Prophet ﷺ said – as narrated by Muslim in his Ṣahīh:

يَنْزَلُ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ لَيْلَةٍ حَتَّى يَقِنَّ ثُلُثَ الْلَّيْلِ الْآخِرِ وَيَقُولُ: مَنْ يَدْعُنِي فَأَسْتَجِيبُ لَهُ، مَنْ يَسْأَلُنِي فَأَعْطِيهِ، مَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُنِي فَأَغْفِرُ لَهُ

“Our Lord descends every night to the lowest heaven when the last third of the night remains, and He says: Who is calling upon Me that I may answer him? Who is asking of Me that I may give him? Who is seeking My forgiveness that I may forgive him?”

And He ﷺ answers the distressed:

﴿أَمَّنْ يُحِبُّ الْمُضْطَرَ إِذَا دَعَاهُ﴾

Is not He [better than your gods] Who responds to the distressed one, when he calls on Him... [An-Naml 27:62]

And He ﷺ is shy to turn away the supplication of His servant when he calls upon Him.

The Prophet ﷺ said – as narrated by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī in his Jāmi‘, who graded it ḥasan, and it is ṣahīh:

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ حَمِيْرٌ كَرِيمٌ يَسْتَحِي مِنْ عَبْدِهِ إِذَا رَفَعَ يَدِيهِ إِلَيْهِ أَنْ يَرْدِهِ مَا صَفَرَ

“Indeed your Lord is Most Modest and Most Generous. He is shy [as befits His Majesty] to turn away the hands of His servant empty when he raises them to Him”.

Ramadān, dear believers, is the month of generosity and giving. Allāh bestowed His bounty upon His servants in it by revealing the Qur’ān therein. And He ﷺ is generous to His servants in it with mercy, forgiveness, and emancipation from the Fire.

And He ﷺ commanded His servants to be generous, so that they may attain the generosity of their Lord . ﷺ said:

﴿مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُفْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ﴾

Who is he that will lend to Allāh a goodly loan, that He may multiply it to him many times? And it is he that will have a noble reward. [Al-Hadīd 57:11]

The Prophet ﷺ was the most generous of people, and he was at his most generous in Ramadān.

Al-Imām Ibn Rajab رحمه الله said: “His generosity was entirely for the sake of Allāh and in seeking the pleasure of Allāh. He would give wealth to a poor or needy person, or spend it in the path of Allāh, or use it to incline someone towards Islām whose acceptance of Islām would strengthen the religion. He would give in a manner that even kings such as Kisrā and Qaysar were unable to match.”

So let each one of us, dear believers, be the winning arrow and the foremost vessel in showing compassion to his believing brothers in faith – in wiping away their tears and relieving their hunger and hardship.

﴿إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

Surely, the Mercy of Allāh is [ever] near unto the good-doers. [Al-A'raf 7:56]

Dear Believers, indeed among the qualities of the people of Paradise – may Allāh preserve you – is that they stand in prayer during the night. Allāh ﷺ said:

﴿كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ﴾

They used to sleep but little by night. And in the hours before dawn, they were [found] asking [Allāh] for forgiveness. [Adh-Dhāriyāt 51:17-18]

And the night prayer, dear believers, is gratitude to Allāh for what He has bestowed and abundantly granted.

‘Ā’ishah رضي الله تعالى عنها al-Šiddīqah, daughter of al-Šiddīq – said that the Prophet ﷺ would stand in prayer at night until his feet would split – that is, crack – from standing. So ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها said: “Why do you do this, O Messenger of Allāh, when your past and future sins have been forgiven”? He ﷺ replied:

أَفَلَا أَكُونْ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا

“Should I not then be a grateful servant”? Narrated by Bukhārī and Muslim.

And in Ramadān there is an opportunity for the one who wishes to join those people, and therein is encouragement for the one already engaged in it, by being regular in the night prayer – whether in the Tarāwīh or other voluntary prayers of the night.

Al-Imām Ibn Rajab رحمه الله said: “Know that in the month of Ramadān the believer combines two struggles against his soul: a struggle by day through fasting, and a struggle by night through standing in prayer. Whoever combines these two struggles, fulfils their rights, and remains patient upon them, will be given his reward without measure.”

Then he رحمه الله mentioned the ḥadīth of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ that the Prophet ﷺ said:

الصيام والقرآن يشفعان للعبد يوم القيمة، يقول الصيام: أي ربى منعته الطعام والشهوة
فتشفعني فيه، ويقول القرآن: منعته النوم بالليل فتشفعني فيه، فيشفعان

“Fasting and the Qur’ān will intercede for the servant on the Day of Resurrection. Fasting will say: ‘O my Lord, I prevented him from food and desire, so allow me to intercede for him.’ And the Qur’ān will say: ‘I prevented him from sleep at night, so allow me to intercede for him.’ So they will both intercede.” Narrated by Imām Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd, and it is ṣaḥīḥ.

Allāh ﷺ said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعُلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

O you who believe! Bow down, and prostrate yourselves, and worship your Lord and do good that you may be successful. [Al-Hajj 22:77]

Indeed, from a person's true happiness in this world and in the Hereafter is that a servant forgets his good deeds and keeps his sins before his very eyes, hastening to repentance and returning to Allāh ﷺ – hastening to repentance and turning back to Him – showing his neediness towards Him, humbling himself before Him, and casting himself down in complete submission to Him ﷺ.

And fasting, dear believers, is a pillar from the pillars of the religion. The Muslim has been commanded to safeguard it and preserve it, lest it be affected by deficiency or fault through sin, or through negligence in fulfilling an obligation. The Prophet ﷺ said – as narrated by Imām al-Bukhārī in his Ṣaḥīḥ:

من لم يدع قول الزور والعمل به والجهل فليس لله حاجة في أن يدع طعامه وشرابه

“Whoever does not give up false speech and acting upon it, and ignorance, Allāh has no need of his leaving his food and drink.”

And lifespans, dear believers, are being folded away; appointed terms draw ever nearer; this world is retreating and the Hereafter is advancing. We are proceeding towards that which those before us have already reached. Every deed and every word is preserved. Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى said:

﴿مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ﴾

Not a word does he [or she] utter but there is a watcher by him ready [to record it]. [Qāf 50:18]

So guard, may Allāh preserve you, these virtuous times. Beware of heedlessness and negligence. Make your fasting and your standing in prayer purely for Allāh. Increase in the recitation of the Qur'ān, reflect deeply upon its meanings, and take heed from the parables and stories set forth therein for you, so that you may attain success and happiness in this world and in the Hereafter.

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