

Relieving a Believer's Hardships¹

“Whoever relieves a believer of a hardship of this life, Allah will relieve from him a hardship of the Day of Resurrection...”

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¹ Taken from Ibn Rajab al-Hanbalī's book, “Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wal-Hikam,” an explanation of the forty-two famous ḥadīth collected by Imam al-Nawawī. The ḥadīth explained in this article is the thirty-sixth one.

The Ḥadīth

« عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ (رضي الله عنه) قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) : مَنْ نَفَّسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ الدُّنْيَا نَفَّسَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ، وَمَنْ يَسَّرَ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ يَسَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ، وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ، وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ .

وَمَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ .

وَمَا اجْتَمَعَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتٍ مِنْ بُيُوتِ اللَّهِ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَيَتَدَارَسُونَهُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِلَّا نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّكِينَةُ وَغَشِيَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ وَحَفَّتَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَذَكَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِيمَنْ عِنْدَهُ .

وَمَنْ بَطَأَ بِهِ عَمَلُهُ لَمْ يُسْرِعْ بِهِ نَسَبُهُ »

Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) said that Allah's messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

Whoever helps a believer with a hardship from the hardships of this life, Allah will help him with a hardship from the hardships of the Day of Resurrection. Whoever shows leniency towards someone in difficulty, Allah will show him leniency in this life and the hereafter. Whoever conceals (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will conceal him in this life and the

hereafter. And Allah will continue to help a servant as long as the servant helps his brother.

Whoever pursues a path seeking knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise.

No group of people gather in one of the houses (mosques) of Allah reciting the book of Allah and studying it among themselves, except that tranquility descends upon them, mercy covers them, the angels surround them, and Allah will mention them to those with him.

And whoever is prevented by his deeds will not be hastened forward by his lineage.²

This ḥadīth was recorded by Muslim from the narration of al-‘Amash, from Abū Ṣālih, from Abū Hurayrah.

More than one scholar has raised criticisms regarding the ḥadīth’s chain of transmission; from them were Abū al-Faḍl al-Harwī and al-Dāruqūṭnī. Aṣḃāṭ Ibn Muḥammad reported it from Al-‘Amash. He said he heard it from Abū Ṣālih but it is clear that al-‘Amash did not report from Abū Ṣālih, nor did he mention who narrated it to him. al-Tirmidhī and others agreed with this chain and some of al-‘Amash’s companions have added that the ḥadīth has also been reported with the wording:

² **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 2699), al-Tirmidhī (no. 1425), and Imam Aḥmad. al-Albānī declared it to be authentic in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī” (no. 1574).

« مَنْ أَقَالَ مُسْلِمًا أَقَالَهُ اللَّهُ عَشْرَتَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ »

Whoever pardons a Muslim, Allah will pardon his faults on the Day of Resurrection.³

And in the two authentic collections (“Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī” and “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim”), there is a similar ḥadīth from Ibn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« الْمُسْلِمُ أَخُو الْمُسْلِمِ لَا يَظْلِمُهُ وَلَا يُسْلِمُهُ ، وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي حَاجَةِ أَخِيهِ كَانَ اللَّهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ ، وَمَنْ فَرَّجَ عَنْ مُسْلِمٍ كُرْبَةً فَرَّجَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبَاتٍ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ، وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ »

Each Muslim is the brother of another Muslim; he neither oppresses him nor betrays him. Whoever remains in the service of his brother, Allah remains in his service. Whoever relieves a Muslim of a hardship, Allah will relieve from him a hardship from the hardships of the Day of Resurrection. And whoever conceals (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will conceal him on the Day of Resurrection.⁴

³ **Authentic:** Recorded by Abū Dāwūd (no. 3460) and Ibn Mājah (no. 2199). al-Albānī declared it to be authentic in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd” (no. 2954) and in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah” (no. 1786).

⁴ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 2442, 6951), Muslim (no. 2580), al-Tirmidhī (no. 1426), Abū Dāwūd (no. 4893), and Imam Aḥmad.

The Explanation of:

مَنْ نَفَّسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ الدُّنْيَا

“Whoever helps a believer with a hardship from the hardships of this life...”

This is an example of a reward being in accordance and similar to the deed. There are many texts like this such as the statement of the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ) (وسلم):

« إِنَّمَا يَرْحَمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الرَّحْمَاءَ »

Allah only shows mercy to those of his servants who are merciful.⁵

The Arabic word كُرْبَةً (*Kurbah*) used in the ḥadīth means any severe hardship that puts a person in great difficulty.

The word نَفَّسَ (*Naffasa*) used means to “help” or “relieve” and is to lessen and decrease some of the burden of such a hardship. The word is derived from the same root as the Arabic word for “breathe” such that when the throat is tight or constricted, its only relief is when helped, allowed it to breathe.

As for the word فَرَّجَ (*Farraja*) (as used in the last ḥadīth on pg. 4), it is greater in that it means to actually remove the hardship from a believer and not just to help

⁵ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 1284, 5655, 6655, 7377, 7448), Muslim (no. 923), al-Nasāī (no. 1868), Abū Dāwūd (no. 3125), Ibn Mājah (no. 1588), and Aḥmad.

lessen its impact. So by doing this, you remove his hardship and thereby completely relieve one's distress and worry.

So the reward for helping and relieving (a believer's hardship) is help and relief (from Allah), and the reward for actually removing it is likewise the removal (of a hardship by Allah) as in the ḥadīth of Ibn 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) (pg. 4, footnote no. 4).

The Explanation of:

نَفْسَ اللَّهِ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةٌ مِنْ كُرْبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

“...Allah will help him with a hardship from the hardships of the Day of Resurrection.”

Regarding the statement, “Allah will help him with a hardship from the hardships of the Day of Resurrection,” the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) didn’t say, “...with the hardships of this life and the hereafter,” as he did in the ḥadīth after mentioning showing leniency towards a believer and concealing his faults.⁶ The reason for this, it is said, is because the Arabic word *Kurbah* or “hardship” refers to extreme hardships and the greatest difficulties. And people in this life do not actually suffers from these types of difficulties no matter how serious his needs may be such as problems like financial difficulties or faults people would want concealed from which hardly anyone escapes.

It is also said the reason is because the hardships of this life compared with those of the hereafter are insignificant. So for this, Allah saves with himself the reward for helping with these kinds of hardships so that he may help such a person with the difficulties of the hereafter. This is understood simply by reflecting upon the statement of the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

⁶ For ease of reference, the ḥadīth is again, “Whoever helps a believer with a hardship from the hardships of this life, Allah will help him with a hardship from the hardships of the Day of Resurrection. Whoever shows leniency towards someone in difficulty, Allah will show him leniency in this life and the hereafter. Whoever conceals (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will conceal him in this life and the hereafter.”

« يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ فِي صَعِيدٍ وَاحِدٍ يُسْمِعُهُمُ الدَّاعِيَ وَيَنْفُذُهُمُ الْبَصَرَ وَتَدْنُو الشَّمْسُ ، فَيَبْلُغُ النَّاسَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَالْكَرْبِ مَا لَا يُطِيقُونَ وَلَا يَحْتَمِلُونَ ، فَيَقُولُ النَّاسُ : أَلَا تَرَوْنَ مَا قَدْ بَلَغَكُمْ ؟ أَلَا تَنْظُرُونَ مَنْ يَشْفَعُ لَكُمْ إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ ؟ »

Allah will gather the people, the first and last of them, together on one plain so that the caller will be heard by them all, and they will all be seen. The sun will come so close to people that they will suffer such distress and hardship as they will not be able to tolerate or withstand. Then people will say, “Don't you see what situation you are in? Will you not look for someone who can intercede for you with your Lord?”⁷

He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) then mentioned the rest of this long narration about intercession. The ḥadīth has been recorded by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim from Abū Hurayrah (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ).

They also both collected a ḥadīth from ‘Āishah, may Allah be pleased with her, that the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« تُحْشَرُونَ حُفَاةً عُرَاةً غُرُلًا »

You will all be resurrected barefooted, naked, and uncircumcised.

‘Āishah asked, “Oh Messenger of Allah, the men and women looking at each other?” So he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) replied:

⁷ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 4712), Muslim (no. 194), al-Tirmidhī (no. 2434), and Aḥmad.

« الْأَمْرُ أَشَدُّ مِنْ أَنْ يُهَمَّهُمْ ذَلِكَ »

The situation will be too severe for them to be concerned with that.⁸

And they collected the ḥadīth of Ibn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) in which he narrated that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said regarding the statement of Allah (سبحانه وتعالى):

﴿ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

The day when mankind will stand before the Lord of all creations.⁹

« يَقُومُ أَحَدُهُمْ فِي رَشْحِهِ إِلَى أَنْصَافِ أُذُنَيْهِ »

Some of them will be standing in their own sweat up to the middle of their ears.¹⁰

Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) also said:

« يَعْرَقُ النَّاسُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حَتَّى يَذْهَبَ عَرَقُهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ سَبْعِينَ ذِرَاعًا
وَيُلْجِمُهُمْ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ آذَانَهُمْ »

The people will sweat so much on the Day of Resurrection that their sweat will sink seventy arm-spans deep into the ground, yet it will still rise up until it reaches their ears.¹¹

⁸ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 6527) and Muslim (no. 2859).

⁹ Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn, 83:6

¹⁰ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 6531), Muslim (no. 2862), al-Tirmidhī (nos. 2422, 3335, 3336), Ibn Mājah (no. 4278) and Imam Aḥmad.

¹¹ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 6532).

The wording of the same ḥadīth in “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim” is:

« إِنَّ الْعَرَقَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَيَذْهَبُ فِي الْأَرْضِ سَبْعِينَ بَاعًا وَإِنَّهُ لَيَبْلُغُ إِلَى أَفْوَاهِ
النَّاسِ أَوْ إِلَى آذَانِهِمْ »

Certainly, the sweat will sink into the ground on the Day of Resurrection to the extent of seventy arm-spans and it would still reach up to people’s mouths or ears.¹²

Muslim also collected a ḥadīth from al-Miqdād (رضي الله عنه) that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ أُذْنِيَتِ الشَّمْسُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ حَتَّى تَكُونَ قِيدَ مِيلٍ أَوْ
اِثْنَيْنِ ، فَتَصْهَرُهُمُ الشَّمْسُ فَيَكُونُونَ فِي الْعَرَقِ بِقَدْرِ أَعْمَالِهِمْ ، فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ
يَأْخُذُهُ إِلَى عَقْبِيهِ ، وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَأْخُذُهُ إِلَى رُكْبَتَيْهِ ، وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَأْخُذُهُ إِلَى
حَقْوِيهِ ، وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يُلْجِمُهُ الْجَمَامًا »

On the Day of Resurrection, the sun will be brought so near to the servants that it will be only a mile or two (above them). It will cause them so much heat that they will be covered in their own sweat according to their deeds. From them, there will be some whose sweat reaches to their heels, some to their knees, some up to their waists, and some to their mouths.¹³

¹² **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 2863).

¹³ **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 2864) and al-Tirmidhī (no. 2421). The actual wording mentioned is from al-Tirmidhī.

The Explanation of:

وَمَنْ يَسِّرْ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ يَسِّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

“Whoever shows leniency towards someone in difficulty,
Allah will show him leniency in this life and the hereafter.”

This is evidence that great difficulties will occur in the hereafter. Allah clearly described the Day of Resurrection as being a difficult day and that it is anything but easy for people who do not believe in him. This may also be understood that he may make it easy for other than them. He (سبحانه وتعالى) says:

﴿ وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ عَسِيرًا ﴾

And it will be upon the disbelievers a difficult day.¹⁴

As for showing leniency with someone in this life with difficulties such as financial problems, this usually occurs in two ways: either by allowing someone more time until it is easier for them (to repay a debt, for example), and this is an obligation as Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) says:

﴿ وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ ﴾

**And if someone is in difficulty, then (let there be a) postponement
until (a time of) ease.¹⁵**

¹⁴ Sūrah al-Furqān, 25:26.

¹⁵ Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:280.

Other times, it may occur by a debtor completely foregoing a debt owed to him or by giving him any assistance that would relieve his financial stress. Both of these actions are greatly virtuous.

In “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī” and “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,” Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrates that the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« كَانَتْ تَأْجِرُ يَدَايْنِ النَّاسِ فَإِذَا رَأَى مُعْسِرًا قَالَ لِفَتِيَانِهِ : تَجَاوَزُوا عَنْهُ لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ أَنْ يَتَجَاوَزَ عَنَّا : فَتَجَاوَزَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ »

There used to be a merchant who would give loans to people. When he would see someone in difficulty, he would say to his workers, “Give him time and pardon him so that perhaps Allah will pardon us.” So Allah pardoned him.¹⁶

They also both collected a ḥadīth from Hudhayfah (رضي الله عنه) and Abū Mas’ūd al-Anṣārī (رضي الله عنه) who said they heard the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) saying:

« مَاتَ رَجُلٌ فَقِيلَ لَهُ : مَا كُنْتَ تَعْمَلُ ؟ قَالَ : كُنْتُ أَبَايِعُ النَّاسَ فَأَتَجَوَّزُ عَنْهُ
الْمُوسِرِ وَأُخَفِّفُ عَنِ الْمُعْسِرِ ، فَغُفِرَ لَهُ »

A man died and was asked, “What did you used to do?” He replied, “I used to do business with people. I would be lenient and give time to the

¹⁶ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 2078), Muslim (no. 1562), and al-Nasāī (no. 4695).

rich (to pay a price or debt) and I would lessen (the price or debt) for the poor.” So he was forgiven.¹⁷

And in Muslim’s version:

« أَنْ رَجُلًا مَاتَ فَدَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ ، فَقِيلَ لَهُ : مَا كُنْتَ تَعْمَلُ ؟ فَقَالَ : إِنِّي كُنْتُ أُبَايِعُ النَّاسَ فَكُنْتُ أَنْظِرُ الْمُعْسِرَ وَأَتَجَوَّزُ فِي السَّكَّةِ أَوْ فِي النَّقْدِ ، فَغُفِرَ لَهُ »

A man died and entered Paradise. So he was asked, “What did you use to do?” He replied, “I used to do business with people and I used to give time for the one in difficulty and I would be lenient with regards to matters of money.” So he was forgiven.¹⁸

Abū Mas’ūd (رضي الله عنه) also narrated that the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« حُوسِبَ رَجُلٌ مِمَّنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ ، فَلَمْ يُوجَدْ لَهُ مِنْ الْخَيْرِ شَيْءٌ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ كَانَ يُخَالِطُ النَّاسَ ، وَكَانَ مُوسِرًا ، فَكَانَ يُأْمُرُ غِلْمَانَهُ أَنْ يَتَجَاوَزُوا عَنِ الْمُعْسِرِ ، قَالَ : اللَّهُ (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) : نَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِذَلِكَ مِنْهُ تَجَاوَزُوا عَنْهُ »

A man before you was taken to account and nothing of good (deeds) was found with him except that he used mix with people. He was a wealthy man and used to instruct his workers to be lenient with and pardon the person in (financial) difficulty. Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) said, “We are more worthy of that than he is, so pardon him.”¹⁹

¹⁷ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 2391).

¹⁸ **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 1560).

¹⁹ **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 1561) and al-Tirmidhī (no. 1307).

Abū Qatādah (رضي الله عنه) also narrated that he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يُنَجِّيَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ كُرْبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلْيَنْفَسْ عَنْ مُعْسِرٍ أَوْ يَضَعْ
عَنْهُ »

Whoever would be pleased that Allah saves him from the hardships of the Day of Resurrection then let him be lenient with someone in difficulty or forego (a debt) for him.²⁰

The prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) also said:

« مَنْ أَنْظَرَ مُعْسِرًا أَوْ وَضَعَ عَنْهُ أَظَلَّهُ اللَّهُ فِي ظِلِّهِ »

Whoever gives time (to pay) to someone in a difficult situation or foregoes (his debt) and pardons him, Allah will shade him under his shade.²¹

²⁰ **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 1563).

²¹ **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 3014). al-Tirmidhī also collected a similar ḥadīth (no. 1306) with the wording:

« مَنْ أَنْظَرَ مُعْسِرًا أَوْ وَضَعَ لَهُ، أَظَلَّهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَحْتَ ظِلِّ عَرْشِهِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ »

Whoever gives time (to pay) to someone in a difficult situation or foregoes (his debt) and pardons him, Allah will shade him on the Day of Resurrection under the shade of his throne – a day on which there will be no shade except his.

al-Albānī said this ḥadīth is authentic in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī” (no. 1052).

The Explanation of:

وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ

“Whoever conceals (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will conceal him in this life and the hereafter.”

This is another point that is emphasized by other texts with similar meanings. Ibn Mājah recorded a ḥadīth from Ibn ‘Abbās (رضي الله عنه) that the prophet (صلى الله عليه) said:

« مَنْ سَتَرَ عَوْرَةَ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ سَتَرَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ، وَمَنْ كَشَفَ عَوْرَةَ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ كَشَفَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ حَتَّى يَفْضَحَهُ بِهَا فِي بَيْتِهِ »

Whoever conceals the faults of his Muslim brother, Allah will conceal his faults on the Day of Resurrection. And whoever exposes the faults of his Muslim brother, Allah will expose his faults even by revealing those he committed in (the privacy of) his home.²²

It is reported that some of the Salaf said something similar:

I have met people having no shameful faults but they began to mention the faults of others, so the people began discovering their faults. And I met people who had faults, yet they used to conceal other people’s faults, so their own faults were forgotten.

²² **Authentic:** Recorded by Ibn Mājah (no. 2546) and al-Albānī said it is authentic in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah” (no. 2063).

The ḥadīth of Abū Barzah (رضي الله عنه) also supports this in that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« يَا مَعْشَرَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِلِسَانِهِ وَلَمْ يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ قَلْبَهُ ، لَا تَغْتَابُوا الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا عَوْرَاتِهِمْ ، فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ اتَّبَعَ عَوْرَاتِهِمْ يَتَّبِعِ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ ، وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ يَفْضَحْهُ فِي بَيْتِهِ »

Oh you who have believed with your tongues but faith has not yet entered your hearts, do not back-bite Muslims. Do not seek to discover their faults, for whoever seeks after their faults, Allah will seek his faults. And if Allah seeks after someone's faults, he will expose him for even (what he committed) in his home.²³

Imam al-Tirmidhī collected a ḥadīth with a similar meaning from Ibn 'Umar (رضي الله عنه).²⁴

And know that people or are two types in this regard:

²³ **Authentic:** Recorded by Abū Dāwūd (no. 4880) and Imam Aḥmad. al-Albānī said it is authentic (*Hasan Ṣaḥīḥ*) in "Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd" (no. 4083).

²⁴ The ḥadīth collected by al-Tirmidhī (no. 2032) that Ibn Rajab is referring to is:

« يَا مَعْشَرَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ بِلِسَانِهِ وَلَمْ يَفُضْ الْإِيمَانُ إِلَى قَلْبِهِ ، لَا تُؤْذُوا الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَلَا تُعِيرُوهُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا عَوْرَاتِهِمْ ، فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ تَتَّبَعَ عَوْرَةَ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ تَتَّبِعَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ ، وَمَنْ تَتَّبِعَ اللَّهُ عَوْرَتَهُ يَفْضَحْهُ وَلَوْ فِي جَوْفِ رَحْلِهِ »

Oh you who have accepted Islam with their tongue yet faith has not reached your hearts, do not harm Muslims. Do not humiliate them, and do not seek to discover their faults. Whoever seeks after the faults of his Muslim brother, Allah will certainly seek his faults. And if Allah seeks his faults, he will expose him even if he were in the innermost privacy of his own home.

al-Albānī said this narration is authentic in "Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī" (no. 1655).

1. People whose faults are not known to others in that they may have committed them in private but nothing of their sins is known. If they make a mistake or sin, it is not permissible to reveal or expose it or even speak about it. That would be the forbidden type of back-biting that has been condemned in the texts. Regarding this, Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ﴾

Indeed, those who like that immorality should be spread and publicized among those who believe, there will be for them a painful punishment in this world and in the hereafter.²⁵

This spreading and publicizing of such immorality from a believer could be regarding something the person actually did or something he is wrongly accused of, being innocent of it, such as the case with the famous story of the lie against ‘Āishah, the wife of the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

Some righteous officials used to instruct those who enjoin good upon people saying, “Try to conceal the sinners, for publicizing their sins is a means of showing the faults of the people of Islam, and the most important thing is to conceal people’s faults.”

Likewise, if a remorseful person comes repenting and admitting his crime, he is not to be exposed or inquired about. Rather, he is ordered to return and conceal

²⁵ Sūrah al-Nūr, 24:19.

his affair as the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) instructed Mā'iz and a *Ghāmīdee* woman.²⁶

²⁶ **Authentic:** This is a reference to the story in which the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) repeatedly refused to carry out the prescribed punishment upon a companion and kept asking for excuses for him. The ḥadīth is recorded by Muslim (no. 1695) from Sulaymān Ibn Buraydah who narrated from his father who said:

Mā'iz Ibn Maalik (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) came to the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and said, "Oh messenger of Allah, purify me (by establishing the prescribed punishment upon me)." He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) replied:

« وَيْحَكَ ارْجِعْ فَاسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ وَتُبْ إِلَيْهِ »

Woe to you. Seek forgiveness from Allah and repent to him.

He then returned and later came back and said the same thing to which the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) kept saying:

« وَيْحَكَ ارْجِعْ فَاسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ وَتُبْ إِلَيْهِ »

Woe to you. Seek forgiveness from Allah and repent to him.

On the fourth time, he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) asked him:

« فِيمَ أَطْهَرُكَ ؟ »

For what should I purify you?

Mā'iz said, "For committing adultery." So Allah's messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) asked (others about the man):

« أَيْهِ جُنُونٌ ؟ »

Is there madness in him?

After being informed that the man is not crazy. He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) further asked:

« أَشْرَبَ خَمْرًا ؟ »

Did he drink alcohol?

A man stood up to him but did not find the smell of alcohol from him. Allah's messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) asked him:

« أَرَزَيْتَ ؟ »

Did you (really) commit adultery?

He replied, "Yes." He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) then instructed that he be stoned. So, the people differed amongst themselves about him into two groups: one saying, "He is ruined! His deeds are lost." and another group saying, "What repentance could be better than the repentance of Mā'iz? He came (willingly) to the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), put his hand in his hand, and said, 'Kill me by the stone.'" So they remained in that state for two or three days. Then the messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) came while they were sitting, greeted them and sat. He said:

He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also did not inquire into the affair of the one who came to him saying, “I transgressed the prescribed limit, so establish the punishment upon me.”²⁷

In the same way, if such a person were to be taken to account for his crime yet the news of which had not reached the leader, then intercession should be made on his part so that he would not inform the leader.

« اسْتَغْفِرُوا لِمَا عَزَبَ بَنِي مَالِكٍ »

Ask for forgiveness for Mā'iz Ibn Mālik.

So they said, “May Allah forgive Mā'iz Ibn Mālik.” Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) then said:

« لَقَدْ تَابَ تَوْبَةً لَوْ قُسِمَتْ بَيْنَ أُمَّةٍ لَوَسِعَتْهُمْ »

He repented with such repentance that if it were divided among the entire nation, it would encompass them all.

The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) did similarly with the pregnant woman who also came to confess committing adultery with Mā'iz.

²⁷ **Authentic:** This story was narrated in the ḥadīth collected by al-Bukhārī (no. 6823), Muslim (no. 2764), and Abū Dāwūd (no. 4381). Anas Ibn Mālik (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) said:

I was with Allah’s messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) when a man came to him and said, “Oh messenger of Allah, I have transgressed the limit, so establish the punishment upon me.” Yet he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) did not ask about him (his crime). The prayer time came and he prayed with the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). When he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) finished the prayer, the man stood and again said, “Oh messenger of Allah, indeed I transgressed the limit so establish the book of Allah upon me.” He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) replied:

« أَلَيْسَ قَدْ صَلَّيْتَ مَعَنَا ؟ »

Did you not pray with us?

He answered, “Yes.” He (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) then told him:

« فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ غَفَرَ لَكَ ذَنْبَكَ أَوْ قَلَّ حَدُّكَ »

Then indeed Allah has forgiven your sin (or he said:) your (transgression of the) prescribed law.

Similarly, there has come a ḥadīth in which the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« أَقِيلُوا ذَوِي الْهَيْئَاتِ عَثْرَاتِهِمْ إِلَّا الْحُدُودَ »

Pardon those of prestigious character of their faults except the prescribed punishments.²⁸

2. The second type of people with respect to sins is those who are well-known for their sins, those who openly and publicly commit them. They themselves are neither concerned at all with the sins they commit, nor with what people say about them. These are the wicked ones who openly display their crimes. Such people do not have the honor of others refraining from back-biting them as has been reported from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and others. Regarding such people, there is no problem with inquiring about their affairs in order to establish the prescribed rulings against them. Some of our companions have explicitly stated this, using as evidence the statement of the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) to Unays (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ):

« وَاعْدُ يَا أُنَيْسُ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ هَذَا فَإِنْ اعْتَرَفَتْ فَارْجُمُهَا »

Go in the morning, Unays, to the wife of this man (she was accused of adultery) and if she confesses, stone her.²⁹

Also, regarding this type of people, intercession is not to be made on their behalf when taken to account even if the news has not reached the leader. Rather, they

²⁸ **Authentic:** Recorded by Abū Dāwūd (no. 4375) and al-Albānī declared it to be authentic in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd” (no. 3679).

²⁹ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 2315), Muslim (no. 1698), al-Tirmidhī (no. 1433), and Ibn Mājah (no. 2549).

are left to have the prescribed penalties pronounced upon them so that their crime is known as a deterrent to others like them.

Imam Mālik said:

Whoever is not known for harming the people, yet may have made some errors or mistakes, then there is no problem with interceding and pleading on his behalf as long as his crimes have not already been conveyed to the leader. As for those who are known for their evil and corruption, I do not like that anyone should intercede or argue on their behalf. Rather they are left to have the sentences carried out upon them.

Ibn al-Mundhir and others have also reported this.

Imam Aḥmad also disliked that crimes should be raised up to the attention of the authorities in every circumstance because often they would not carry out the prescribed punishments as they should. For this he said, “If you know that the ruling will be (correctly) pronounced upon a person, then raise the matter (to the attention of the leaders).” It was mentioned that some people beat a man (as a punishment for a crime) until he died, while killing him was not permissible. If only the person would have repented from the time he committed the offense, it would have been better for him in that he repents for something between him and Allah, thereby concealing his own sin. As for his second offense, some people are of the opinion he should do the same—he should not disclose it. Still, others have said that even upon the first offense, a person should come to the leader and

confess against himself in what requires a prescribed punishment so that he may be purified (of his crime).

The Explanation of:

وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ

“And Allah will continue to help a servant as long as the servant helps his brother.”

Similarly to this statement, in the narration of Ibn ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) that has already been mentioned, the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي حَاجَةِ أَخِيهِ كَانَ اللَّهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ »

Whoever remains in the service of his brother, Allah remains in his service.³⁰

The virtues of fulfilling someone’s needs and helping them have previously been shown in the explanations of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth ḥadīth.³¹

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (رضي الله عنه) used to milk sheep or goats for a particular neighborhood. When he was appointed as the successor and leader of the entire nation of Muslims, one of their maids said, “Now, he will not milk them for us.” Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) said, “No, I hope the current position I have assumed will not change anything I used to do,” or he said something similar to this.

³⁰ **Authentic:** Recorded by Al-Bukhārī (no. 2442, 6951), Muslim (no. 2580), al-Tirmidhī (no. 1426), Abū Dāwūd (no. 4893), and Imam Aḥmad.

³¹ In the original Arabic book, “Jāmi’ al-‘Ulūm wal-Ḥikam” in which Ibn Rajab explains the rest of Imam al-Nawawī’s forty-two ḥadīth.

They used to assist others in milking because, among the Arabs, it used to be considered improper for women to have to milk their animals. So when the men of the area were absent, they (the remaining women) needed someone who would milk the animals for them.

'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) used to care for the widows and fetch water for them at night. One night, Ṭalḥah (رضي الله عنه) saw him entering a woman's house, so Ṭalḥah visited her the next day. He discovered she was elderly, crippled, and blind. He asked her, "What does that man ('Umar) do for you?" She replied, "This man, ever since such and such time, he has cared for me. He comes to me with whatever I need and he removes any hardships from me." Ṭalḥah then said (to himself), "May your mother lose you, Ṭalḥah! You were actually seeking to discover some faults of 'Umar?!"

Mujāhid said, "I once accompanied Ibn 'Umar on a journey in order to serve him but instead, he ended up serving me."

Many righteous people used to make it a condition that they would only allow their companions to accompany them if they agreed to be served by them.

Recorded in the two authentic collections, Anas (رضي الله عنه) said: We were with the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) on a journey. Some of us were fasting and others not. We stopped at a place to rest during a very hot day. Most of us had (sufficient) clothing to shade ourselves, but some people had nothing more than their hands to protect them against the sun. Those who were fasting were unable

to do anything (from the heat, fasting, exhaustion, etc.). So, those who were not fasting had to establish and provide shelter and water the riding animals. So Allah's messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« ذَهَبَ الْمُفْطِرُونَ الْيَوْمَ بِالْأَجْرِ »

Today, those who were not fasting have gone and taken the rewards.³²

³² **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 2890), Muslim (no. 1119), and al-Nasāī (no. 2283).

The Explanation of:

وَمَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ

“Whoever pursues a path seeking knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise.”

Pursuing a path seeking religious knowledge includes actually traversing a physical path such as walking to the gatherings of the scholars, and it also includes pursuing a figurative path in that any means leading to the acquisition of religious knowledge would be considered pursuing a path to knowledge. Examples would be memorization, studying, reviewing, research, writing, comprehension, and any other way of obtaining knowledge.

The prophet’s statement, “Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise,” could mean that Allah will make the knowledge he seeks easy for him to learn and the path or means of obtaining it easy too. And surely, religious knowledge is the path leading to Paradise. This ease and facilitation is similar to the verse:

﴿وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ﴾

And we have certainly made the Quran easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?³³

³³ Sūrah al-Qamar, 54:17.

Some of the Salaf have said that anyone who seeks knowledge, Allah will help him. It may also be understood that Allah will make it easy for the student of knowledge if he intends by his learning to please Allah, seeking only his face (سبحانه وتعالى) and to benefit from it and act upon it. In that way, it becomes a means of his guidance and his entry into Paradise.

Allah may also facilitate other areas or sciences of knowledge for a student other than what he initially seeks to learn, thereby benefiting him and becoming the means leading him to Paradise. It is said, “Whoever acts upon what he knows, Allah will cause him to learn more knowledge of which he had previously been unaware.” Similarly, it is also said, “The reward for doing a good deed is the facilitation of another good deed after it.” The statement of Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) supports this:

﴿ وَيَزِيدُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى ﴾

And Allah increases those who were guided with (more) guidance.³⁴

And his statement (سبحانه وتعالى):

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَآتَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ ﴾

And those who are guided, he increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness.³⁵

³⁴ Sūrah Maryam, 19:76.

³⁵ Sūrah Muhammad, 47:17.

Also included in the meaning of this ḥadīth is that Allah will make the actual pathway to Paradise easy which is the bridge (over the fire) leading to it. He will also make the severe and terrifying circumstances before it and after it easy. So Allah may help the student of knowledge with these things because he benefitted from his knowledge.

Undoubtedly, religious knowledge is one of the foremost ways leading to Allah. So whoever traverses his path without deviating from it, he will reach Allah (سبحانه) and his Paradise by the nearest and easiest path.

We understand that these paths leading to Paradise will be made easy upon him, all of them (the actual and figurative paths) in this life and the hereafter. There is no path a servant could take to know Allah and his pleasure, to success by drawing near to him, and to conversing with him in this life and the hereafter except with beneficial knowledge—that which Allah sent his messengers with and revealed in his books. It is this evidence and support that leads to Allah. By it (this knowledge), the person becomes correctly guided amongst the darkness of ignorance, doubts, and false beliefs. As such, Allah has referred to his book as a light because he guides people therewith through darkness. Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) says:

﴿ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ • يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ
السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴾

There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear book. By it, Allah guides those who pursue his pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out of darkness into light by his permission and guides them to a straight path.³⁶

The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) likened the carrier of religious knowledge to the one who uses the stars for guidance and direction throughout the night. If the stars become overshadowed, the travelers would lose their direction. So as long as the correct religious knowledge remains on earth, people will be guided. Knowledge remaining on earth is dependent upon its carriers and possessors remaining. If those with knowledge and those who support it depart, people would fall back into misguidance just as has been mentioned in “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī” and “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim” from ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) that the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ انْتِزَاعًا يَنْتَزِعُهُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ، وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ بِقَبْضِ الْعُلَمَاءِ حَتَّى إِذَا لَمْ يَبْقَ عَالِمًا اتَّخَذَ النَّاسُ رُءُوسًا جُهَالًا ، فَسُئِلُوا فَأَفْتَوْا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ فَضَلُّوا وَأَضَلُّوا »

Indeed, Allah does not take away knowledge by removing it all at once from the servants. Instead, he takes knowledge away by taking the scholars (in death) until there remains no scholar and people accept ignorant leaders. People will question them and they will give religious

³⁶ Sūrah al-Māidah, 5:15-16.

verdicts with no knowledge, thereby remaining misguided and misleading others.³⁷

One day the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) mentioned that knowledge will be raised up. So he was asked (by Ziyād Ibn Labīd), “How will it be taken from us while we have read the Quran? By Allah, we certainly read it ourselves and encourage our women and children to read it?” The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« هَذِهِ التَّوْرَةُ وَالْإِنْجِيلُ عِنْدَ الْيَهُودِ وَالنَّصَارَى فَمَاذَا تُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ »

Here is the Torah and the Gospel still with the Jews and the Christians;
how has it benefited them?³⁸

‘Ubādah Ibn al-Ṣāmit (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) was asked about this ḥadīth and he said, “If you want, I will inform you of the first thing of knowledge to be taken from people: humility.” ‘Ubādah Ibn al-Ṣāmit said “humility” because knowledge is of two types:

1. Knowledge the fruits of which are produced within people’s hearts. It is the knowledge of Allah, his names and attributes, and his actions which instill within a person a sense of fear of him, honor of him, submission to him, love of him, hoping in him, and the willingness to call upon him and rely upon him. This is the beneficial knowledge.

³⁷ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 100), Muslim (no. 2673), al-Tirmidhī (no. 2652), Ibn Mājah (no. 52), Imam Aḥmad (6475), and al-Dārimī (239).

³⁸ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Tirmidhī (no. 2653) and Ibn Mājah (no. 4048).

2. The second type of knowledge is that which is merely upon the tongue. It is Allah's evidence in support of you or against you. So the first thing to be removed of knowledge is the beneficial knowledge which is that inner awareness which resides in the hearts and sets people straight. When this is removed, knowledge will remain only upon the tongue as evidence. People will begin to belittle it and not act in accordance with it, neither the possessor of such knowledge nor others. Then this type of knowledge will also be removed by the removal of those who carry it. At this time, nothing will remain except the Quran, and only in books. At such time, no one will know its meanings, its rulings, or its laws. Finally, towards the end of time even the written Quran will be removed; nothing of it will be found, neither in books nor within people's hearts. Then the final hour will be established as the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« لَا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ إِلَّا عَلَى شِرَارِ النَّاسِ »

The (final) hour will not be established except upon the worst of people.³⁹

And he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also said:

« لَا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حَتَّى لَا يُقَالَ فِي الْأَرْضِ : اللَّهُ اللَّهُ »

The (final) hour will not be established until no one on earth even says,

“Allah, Allah.”⁴⁰

³⁹ **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 2949).

⁴⁰ **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 148).

The Explanation of:

وَمَا اجْتَمَعَ قَوْمٌ فِي بَيْتٍ مِنْ بُيُوتِ اللَّهِ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَيَتَدَارَسُونَهُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِلَّا نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّكِينَةُ وَغَشِيَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ وَحَفَّتَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَذَكَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِيمَنْ عِنْدَهُ

“No group of people gather in one of the houses (mosques) of Allah reciting the book of Allah and studying it amongst themselves, except that tranquility will descend upon them, mercy will cover them, the angels will surround them, and Allah will mention them to those with him.”

This shows the virtue and preference of sitting in mosques, reciting and studying the Quran. This applies to both studying the Quran as well as teaching it; there is no difference with regards to their virtues.

In a ḥadīth recorded in “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,” ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ »

The best of you are those who learn the Quran and teach it.⁴¹

⁴¹ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 5027), al-Tirmidhī (no. 2907, 2908, 2909), Abū Dāwūd (no. 1452), Ibn Mājah (no. 211), and by Aḥmad and al-Dārimī.

Abū ‘Abdur-Raḥmān al-Sulamī said, “And that is exactly what has caused me to sit right here.” He used to teach the Quran during the leadership of ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān (رضي الله عنه) so much that even word of his teaching reached al-Hajjāj Ibn Yūsuf (a leader who came many years later).

So although such virtue may be generally applied to other forms of religious knowledge, gathering in the mosques to study the Quran has explicitly been mentioned here.

Sometimes, even the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) would ask someone else to recite the Quran so he could listen to his recital as Ibn Mas‘ūd (رضي الله عنه) used to recite to him and he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« إِنِّي أَحِبُّ أَنْ أَسْمَعَهُ مِنْ غَيْرِي »

I like to hear it from someone besides myself.⁴²

‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) used to also instruct someone to read to him and his companions while they would listen. He would sometimes ask Abū Mūsá and other times ‘Uqbah Ibn ‘Āmir (رضي الله عنهما).

As a general proof to support the virtue of studying the Quran, most scholars also use the ḥadīth regarding the merits of gathering for the remembrance of Allah because the Quran is the best type of remembrance.

⁴² **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 5049, 5056), Muslim (no. 800), al-Tirmidhī (no. 3025), and Abū Dāwūd (no. 3668).

Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَلَائِكَةً يَطُوفُونَ فِي الطُّرُقِ يَلْتَمِسُونَ أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ، فَإِذَا وَجَدُوا قَوْمًا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ تَنَادَوْا: هَلُمُّوا إِلَيَّ حَاجَتِكُمْ، فَيَحْفُونَهُمْ بِأَجْنِحَتِهِمْ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا، فَيَسْأَلُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ مِنْهُمْ: مَا يَقُولُ عِبَادِي؟ قَالُوا: يَقُولُونَ يُسَبِّحُونَكَ وَيُكَبِّرُونَكَ وَيَحْمَدُونَكَ وَيَمَجِّدُونَكَ، فَيَقُولُ: هَلْ رَأَوْنِي؟ فَيَقُولُونَ: لَا وَاللَّهِ مَا رَأَوْنَا، فَيَقُولُ: وَكَيْفَ لَوْ رَأَوْنِي؟ يَقُولُونَ: لَوْ رَأَوْنَا كَانُوا أَشَدَّ لَكَ عِبَادَةً وَأَشَدَّ لَكَ تَمَجِيدًا وَتَحْمِيدًا وَأَكْثَرَ لَكَ تَسْبِيحًا، يَقُولُ: فَمَا يَسْأَلُونِي؟ قَالَ يَسْأَلُونَكَ الْجَنَّةَ، يَقُولُ: وَهَلْ رَأَوَهَا؟ يَقُولُونَ: لَا وَاللَّهِ يَا رَبِّ مَا رَأَوَهَا، يَقُولُ: فَكَيْفَ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَأَوَهَا؟ يَقُولُونَ: لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَأَوَهَا كَانُوا أَشَدَّ عَلَيْهَا حِرْصًا وَأَشَدَّ لَهَا طَلَبًا وَأَعْظَمَ فِيهَا رَغْبَةً، قَالَ: فَمِمَّ يَتَعَوَّدُونَ؟ يَقُولُونَ: مِنَ النَّارِ، يَقُولُ: وَهَلْ رَأَوَهَا؟ يَقُولُونَ: لَا وَاللَّهِ يَا رَبِّ مَا رَأَوَهَا، يَقُولُ: فَكَيْفَ لَوْ رَأَوَهَا؟ يَقُولُونَ: لَوْ رَأَوَهَا كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهَا فِرَارًا وَأَشَدَّ لَهَا مَخَافَةً، فَيَقُولُ: فَأُشْهِدُكُمْ أَنِّي قَدْ غَفَرْتُ لَهُمْ، يَقُولُ مَلَكٌ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ: فِيهِمْ فُلَانٌ لَيْسَ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّمَا جَاءَ لِحَاجَةٍ، قَالَ: هُمْ الْجُلَسَاءُ لَا يَشْقَى بِهِمْ جَلِيسُهُمْ »

Allah has angels that go from place to place searching for people remembering (talking about) Allah. When they find a particular group of people mentioning Allah, they call out (to other angels), “Come here to your objective.” They then envelope them (the people) with their wings reaching to the sky. Their Lord asks them, yet he knows more than they do, “What are my servants saying?” The angels reply, “They are glorifying you, declaring your greatness, praising you, and exalting you.” He asks,

“Have they seen me?” They reply, “No, by Allah, they have not seen you.” He further asks, “And what if they saw me?” The angels answer, “If they saw you, they would be even stronger in worshipping you, stronger in glorifying and praising you, and they would exalt you even more.” Allah further asks, “What are they asking of me?” “They are asking you for Paradise,” the angels say. “And have they seen it?” “No, by Allah, oh Lord, they have not seen it.” Allah asks, “What if they had seen it?” The angels answer, “If they had seen it, they would be even more eager for it, even stronger in seeking it, and their desire for it would greatly increase.” Allah then asks, “From what are they seeking protection?” “From the Fire,” the angels reply. “And have they seen it?” They answer, “No, by Allah, oh Lord, they have not seen it.” He says, “And what if they had seen it?” “If they had seen it, they would be even stronger in fleeing from it and fear it much more.” Allah then says, “I call you all to witness that I have forgiven them.” One of the angels says, “There is a person not from among them; he only came for some other need.” He says, “They are all sitting together and because of them, anyone who accompanies them will not be saddened.”⁴³

Imam Muslim also recorded a ḥadīth from Mu’āwiyah (رضي الله عنه) that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) once came upon a group of his companions sitting together in the mosque, so he asked them:

« مَا أَجَلَسَكُم؟ »

⁴³ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 6408) and Muslim (no. 2689).

What has caused you to sit together?

They replied, “We sat to remember and mention Allah and praise and thank him for guiding us to Islam and bestowing the blessing of it upon us.” He (ﺻﻠﻰ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻴﻪ) (ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻴﻪ ﻭﺳﻠﻢ) further asked them:

« ﺁﻟﻠﻪ ﻣﺎ ﺁﺟﻠﺴﻜﻢ ﺇﻻ ﺫﺍﻙ؟ »

By Allah, you sat for no other reason than that?

They said, “By Allah, that is the only reason we sat together.” The prophet (ﺻﻠﻰ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻴﻪ ﻭﺳﻠﻢ) then told them:

« ﺁﻣﺎ ﺇﻧﻲ ﻟﻢ ﺁﺳﺘﺤﻠﻒﻜﻢ ﺗﻬﻤﺔ ﻟﻜﻢ ﻭﻟﻜﻨﻨﻪ ﺁﺗﺎﻧﻲ ﺟﻴﺮﻳﻞ ﻓﺁﺧﺒﺮﻧﻲ ﺃﻥ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﺰَّ ﻭﺟﻞ ﺇﻳﻴﺎﻫﻲ ﺑﻜﻢ ﺍﻟﻤﻼﺋﻜﺔ »

I did not ask you to swear because I was accusing you of anything. Rather, (the angel) Jibrīl came to me and informed me that Allah (ﻋﺰَّ ﻭﺟﻞ) is praising you, boasting of you to the angels.⁴⁴

There are many other ḥadīth with similar meanings.

So Allah’s messenger (ﺻﻠﻰ ﺍﻟﻠﻪ ﻋﻠﻴﻪ ﻭﺳﻠﻢ) mentions that the reward for those who sit in the mosque to study the book of Allah is of four types:

⁴⁴ **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 2701), al-Tirmidhī (no. 3379), and al-Nasāī (no. 5426).

1. Tranquility descending upon them. Also, al-Barā Ibn ‘Āzib (رضي الله عنه) narrated a ḥadīth in which he said: A man was once reading Sūrah al-Kahf (no. 18) while he was with his horse. A cloud then covered him and began to encircle and draw closer so much that his horse fled from it. The next morning, he went to the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and told him about that to which he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« تِلْكَ السَّكِينَةُ تَنْزَلَتْ بِالْقُرْآنِ »

That was the tranquility descending because of (the recitation of) the Quran.⁴⁵

Abū Sa’īd (رضي الله عنه) also narrated that Uṣayd Ibn Huḍayr (رضي الله عنه) was reciting one night and his horse came to him. He kept reading and then another horse came and then another. He then stopped reciting and said, “I was afraid they would trample upon Yahyá (his son).” He went to them and noticed a shade over his head with what appeared to be like lamps in it. It began to ascend up into the sky until he could no longer see it. The next morning he mentioned it to the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) who said:

« تِلْكَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كَانَتْ تَسْتَمِعُ لَكَ وَلَوْ قَرَأْتَ لِأَصْبَحَتْ يَرَاهَا النَّاسُ مَا تَسْتَتِرُ مِنْهُمْ »

Those were angels listening to you. If you would have kept reciting, people would have been able to see that which is hidden from them (the angels).⁴⁶

⁴⁵ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 5011) and Muslim (no. 795).

2. The second type of reward given to those who sit to study the book of Allah is that they will be covered with mercy. Allah says:

﴿ إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the good-doers.⁴⁷

3. The angels will envelope them, and this is explicitly mentioned in the ḥadīth itself.

4. Allah will mention them to those (angels) who are with him. Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) also said:

« يَقُولُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي، وَأَنَا مَعَهُ إِذَا ذَكَرَنِي، فَإِنِ ذَكَرَنِي فِي نَفْسِهِ ذَكَرْتُهُ فِي نَفْسِي، وَإِنِ ذَكَرَنِي فِي مَلَأٍ ذَكَرْتُهُ فِي مَلَأٍ خَيْرٍ مِنْهُمْ »

Allah (تعالى) says, “I am as my servant thinks of me, and I am with him when he mentions me. If he mentions me to himself, I mention him to myself, and if he mentions me in a gathering, I mention him in an even better gathering (i.e. among the angels).”⁴⁸

These four virtues are for any group of people who gather to mention and remember Allah just as the ḥadīth in “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim” states in which Abū Hurayrah and Abū Sa’īd both narrate that the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

⁴⁶ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (“Fath al-Bārī” 9/63) and Muslim (no. 796).

⁴⁷ Sūrah al-‘Arāf, 7:56.

⁴⁸ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 7405) and Muslim (no. 2675).

« لَا يَقْعُدُ قَوْمٌ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَّا حَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ، وَغَشِيَتْهُمُ الرَّحْمَةُ، وَنَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّكِينَةُ، وَذَكَرَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِيمَنْ عِنْدَهُ »

No people sit and mention Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) except that the angels surround them, mercy covers them, tranquility descends upon them, and Allah will mention them to those (angels) who are with Him.⁴⁹

Allah also says:

﴿ فَادْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرْكُمْ ﴾

So remember Me, I will remember you.⁵⁰

As for Allah remembering and mentioning his servant, it is his praise of him among the highest gathering of angels, boasting of them and commending them.

He (سبحانه وتعالى) also says:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا • وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا • هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ﴾

Oh you who believe, remember Allah with much remembrance, and exalt him morning and afternoon. It is he who praises you as well as the angels that he may take you out of darkness into light.⁵¹

⁴⁹ **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 2700).

⁵⁰ Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:152.

⁵¹ Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33:41-43.

The Explanation of:

وَمَنْ بَطَأَ بِهِ عَمَلُهُ لَمْ يُسْرِعْ بِهِ نَسَبُهُ

“And whoever is prevented by his deeds will not be hastened forward by his lineage.”

The meaning of this statement is that actions and deeds are the only means by which the servant attains whatever levels he may deserve in the hereafter as Allah says:

﴿وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا ۚ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

And for all are levels (resulting) from what they have done.⁵²

So whoever is prevented from reaching the high levels with Allah because of his deeds, his (noble) lineage will not benefit him and hasten him forward to reach them. Allah (عزَّ وجلَّ) has prescribed and prepared the rewards according to actions, not one's relations. He (تعالى) says:

﴿فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ﴾

So when the horn is blown, no relationships will there be among them that day, nor will they ask about one another.⁵³

⁵² Sūrah al-An'ām, 6:132.

⁵³ Sūrah al-Muminūn, 23:101.

Allah has also commanded hastiness in seeking his forgiveness and mercy by doing righteous actions as He says:

﴿ وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ • الَّذِينَ يَنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاطِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden (Paradise) as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous – those who spend during ease and hardship, who restrain anger, and who pardon people. And Allah loves the good-doers.⁵⁴

And he says:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُونَ • وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ • وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يَرْبُّهُمْ لَا يَشْرِكُونَ • وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ • أُولَٰئِكَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ ﴾

Certainly, those who are apprehensive from fear of their Lord, those who believe in the signs of their Lord, those who do not associate anything (in worship) with their Lord, and those who give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord – It is those who hasten to good deeds and they surpass (others) thereby.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Sūrah Āli-'Imrān, 3:133-134.

⁵⁵ Sūrah al-Muminūn, 23:57-61.

In “Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī” and “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim,” Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated a ḥadīth in which he said that whenever the following verse was revealed to the prophet:

﴿ وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ ﴾

And warn your closest relatives.⁵⁶

...he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) then told his relatives:

« يَا مَعْشَرَ قُرَيْشٍ اشْتَرُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا أُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا، يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ
مَنْفٍ لَا أُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا، يَا عَبَّاسُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ لَا أُغْنِي عَنْكَ
مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا، وَيَا صَفِيَّةُ عَمَّةَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ لَا أُغْنِي عَنْكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا، وَيَا
فَاطِمَةَ بِنْتَ مُحَمَّدٍ سَلِّينِي مَا شِئْتَ مِنْ مَالِي لَا أُغْنِي عَنْكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا »

Oh Quraysh, purchase your own souls (from Allah), for I cannot help you at all before Allah. Oh tribe of ‘Abdul-Manāf, I cannot help you at all before Allah. Oh ‘Abbās Ibn ‘Abdul-Muṭṭalib, I cannot help you at all before Allah. Oh Ṣafīyyah, aunt of Allah’s messenger, I cannot help you at all before Allah. And oh Fāṭimah, daughter of Muhammad, ask me for whatever you want of my wealth, but I cannot help you at all before Allah.⁵⁷

This is also attested to by the ḥadīth of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Ās (رضي الله عنه) in which he heard the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) saying:

⁵⁶ Sūrah al-Shu‘arā, 26:214.

⁵⁷ **Authentic:** Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 2753), Muslim (no. 206), and al-Nasāī (no. 3646).

« أَلَا إِنَّ آلَ أَبِي يَعْنِي فُلَانًا لَيْسُوا لِي بِأَوْلِيَاءَ، إِنَّمَا وَلِيِّ اللَّهِ وَصَالِحُ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ »

Indeed, the family of my father (meaning any relatives) are not (necessarily) my supporters. Rather, my supporters are only Allah and the righteous believers.⁵⁸

This shows that allegiance with him is not gained merely by relations no matter how close his relatives may be. It is only achieved by faith and righteous actions. So those who are more complete in faith and deed then they are greater in alliance with the messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) regardless of whether they are close relatives or not.

⁵⁸ **Authentic:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 215).