

• A few samples from *Ihyā' 'Ulum ad-Dīn* •

1. from Book 4

**Stories and traditional reports concerning the humble  
(may Allāh be well pleased with them) and their ritual prayers:**

It should be known that humility is the product of faith and the result of conviction, brought about by the majestic power of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). Those blessed with it are humble not only in their ritual prayers, but at other times too, even when they are on their own or when they need to use the toilet, for humility is caused by the awareness that we are always in the sight by Allāh, by awareness of His Majesty and by awareness of our human failings. It is by consciousness of these things that humility is engendered, so it is not confined to ritual prayers.

There was once a man, we are told, who never held his head up toward the sky in all of forty years, so great was his modesty and humility before Allāh (Glory be to Him).

Some people assumed that ar-Rabī' ibn Khaitham must be blind, because he always lowered his head and kept his eyes half-closed. For twenty years, he was a regular visitor to the home of Ibn Mas'ūd. When the latter's maidservant saw him, she would say to her master: "Your blind friend is here!" Ibn Mas'ūd used to laugh when she said this. Whenever she went to answer the guest's knock at the door, she would see him with head down and his eyes averted. Ibn Mas'ūd would look at him and say, quoting from the Qur'ān: "**And give good tidings to the humble** [*wa bashshiri 'l-mukhbitīn*]." (Q.22:34). Then he would add: "By Allāh, if the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) had seen you, he would have been so pleased with you!" (In one version of this story, the wording is: "he would have loved you," and in another: "he would have laughed.")

One day, he was walking with Ibn Mas'ūd when they passed by the blacksmith's workshop. He fell in a faint at the sight of the bellows and the fire blazing in the furnace. Ibn Mas'ūd sat with him until the time of the ritual prayer, but he did not come to his senses. He then carried him home, where he remained unconscious until twenty-four hours after having fainted, missing all five ritual prayers. Ibn Mas'ūd stayed close by him, saying: "By Allāh, this is real fear!"

Ar-Rabī' used to say: "When engaged in the ritual prayer, I never pay attention to anything, except what I am saying and what is being said to me."

'Āmir ibn 'Abdi'llāh was one of those who are humble in their ritual prayers. He would sometimes perform his ritual prayer while his daughter was playing the tambourine, and the women of the household were chattering freely, but he was quite insensitive to the noise and did not even hear it. They once asked him: "Does anything come into your mind during the ritual prayer?" "Yes," said he, "the thought that I am standing in the presence of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and that I am bound for the Garden of Paradise or for the Fire of Hell." He was then asked: "Do you get any worldly thoughts, as we do?" To this he replied: "I would rather be made a butt for lances, than get that sort of thing in my ritual prayer!" He was also in the habit of saying: "Even if the veil was lifted from the Unseen, my faith could not be more certain than it is now!"

Another of these characters was Muslim ibn Yasār, the one who did not notice the collapse of a column while he was performing the ritual prayer in the mosque.

One of these men had a gangrenous limb. Amputation was necessary, but it seemed impossible until someone said: "He will not feel a thing while he is performing the ritual prayer." The operation was, in fact, successfully performed during the ritual prayer.

Someone said: “Ritual prayer belongs to the Hereafter; to enter it is to leave this world.” Another was asked if he had any worldly thoughts during his ritual prayers. “Neither in my ritual prayers nor at any other time,” said he. Yet another was asked: “Do you remember anything during the ritual prayer?” He replied: “Is anything dearer to me than the ritual prayer, that I should recall it while I am performing the ritual prayer?”

Abu’d-Dardā’ (may Allāh be well pleased with him) used to say: “The sensible thing is to attend to one’s needs first, so as to have nothing on one’s mind when approaching the ritual prayer.”

Some of them would keep their ritual prayers short, fearing the whisperings of the devil. We are told that, on a certain occasion, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir finished his ritual prayer rather quickly. When someone commented on this, he said: “Did you see me skip any of the essentials?” The answer was: “No!” Then he explained: “I was forestalling the distraction of Satan. Allāh’s Messenger said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): **‘Even if a man performs the whole ritual prayer, he may be credited with no more than half of it, or one third, one quarter, one fifth, one sixth or one tenth. A man receives credit only for that part of his ritual prayer of which he is conscious.’**”<sup>1</sup>

It is said that Ṭalḥa and az-Zubair were among a group of the Companions (may Allāh be well pleased with them), who were particularly noted for keeping their ritual prayers brief. They explained that they followed this practice in order to forestall the whisperings of Satan.

It is related that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allāh be well pleased with him) said from the pulpit: “A man’s whiskers may turn gray in Islām, without his having completed one ritual prayer for Allāh (Exalted is He).” When the people asked how this could be, he said: “Because he never achieves perfect humility, submissiveness and devotion to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) in any of his ritual prayers.”

Abu’l-‘Āliya was once asked about Allāh’s saying (Exalted is He): **“Those who are heedless of their prayers [alladhīna hum ‘an ṣalāti-him sāhūn].”** (Q.107:5). He said: “This refers to those who are so heedless in their ritual prayers, that they do not know whether they have performed an even number of cycles or an odd number.” According to al-Ḥasan, it refers to those who heedlessly let the time for ritual prayer slip by. Others say: “This is directed at those who are neither happy when they pray on time, nor sorry when they are late in performing the ritual prayer. They see no virtue in promptness, and no sin in delay.”

Jesus said (peace be upon him): “Allāh (Exalted is He) says: ‘Through obligatory duties, My servant attains salvation. Through supererogatory devotions, My servant draws near to Me.’”

The Prophet said (peace be upon him): **“Allāh (Exalted is He) says: ‘My servant does not achieve salvation except by fulfilling the duties that I have set him.’”**<sup>2</sup>

It is related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once omitted a verse from the part of the Qur’ān that he recited in the course of a ritual prayer. As he was turning to leave, he said: “What did I recite?” No one spoke, so he repeated the question to Ubayy ibn Ka‘b (may Allāh be well pleased with him), who said: “You recited such-and-such a Sūra, omitting a particular verse. We are wondering whether it has been abrogated or taken out.” The Prophet said (peace be upon him): “Good for you, O Ubayy!” Then he turned to the others and said: “What are we to make of people who come for their ritual prayers, line up in their rows behind their Prophet, but do not know what he is reciting to them from the Book of their Lord? That is just how the Children of Israel behaved, so

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Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) spoke to their Prophet through inspiration, saying: ‘Tell your people: “You present your bodies before Me and you offer me your tongues, but you keep your hearts from Me. What you are doing is futile!”’

## 2. from Book 6

**As for extra-special fasting**, it means the fasting of the heart from unworthy concerns and worldly thoughts, in total disregard of everything other than Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He). This kind of fast is broken by thinking of anything other than Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) and the Hereafter. It is broken by thinking of worldly matters, except those that are conducive to religious ends, since these constitute provisions for the Hereafter and are not of this lower world. Those versed in the spiritual life of the heart have even said that a sin is recorded against someone who concerns himself all day with arrangements for breaking his fast. Such anxiety stems from lack of trust in the bounty of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), and from lack of certain faith in His promised sustenance. This is the degree of the Prophets, the champions of the truth and those drawn near [to the Lord]. It does not lend itself to detailed examination in speech, but rather to realization in action. It consists in utmost dedication to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), to the neglect of everything other than Allāh (Glory be to Him). It is bound up with the significance of His saying (Almighty and Glorious is He): **“Say: ‘Allāh!’ then leave them to their idle prattling [quli ‘llāhu thumma dhar-hum fī khawḍi-him yal‘abūn].”** (Q.6:91)

## 3. from Book 9

### The Merit of Seeking Forgiveness

Allāh (Exalted is He) has said: **“And those who, when they commit an indecency or wrong themselves, remember Allāh and seek forgiveness for their sins – Who forgives sins but Allāh? – and will not knowingly repeat what they did, the reward of such will be forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens underneath which rivers flow, dwelling therein forever – a bountiful reward for workers [wa ‘lladhīna idhā fa‘alū fāhishatan aw ḡalamū anfusa-hum dhakara ‘llāha fa-‘staghfarū li-dhunūbi-him – wa man yaḡfiru ‘dh-dhunūba illa ‘llāh – wa lam yuṣirru ‘alā mā fa‘alū wa hum ya‘lamūn]!”** (Q.3:135-6)

According to ‘Alqama and al-Aswad, ‘Abdu’llāh ibn Mas‘ūd said (may Allāh be well pleased with him): “In the Book of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) there are two verses which are such that no servant has committed a sin, then recited them and sought forgiveness from Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), without his being forgiven by Allāh (Exalted is He): **“And those who, when they commit an indecency or wrong themselves, remember Allāh and seek forgiveness for their sins ... [wa ‘lladhīna idhā fa‘alū fāhishatan aw ḡalamū anfusa-hum dhakara ‘llāha fa-‘staghfarū li-dhunūbi-him ...],”** (Q.3:135), and His saying (Almighty and Glorious is He): **“And if someone does evil or wrongs his own soul, then seeks pardon of Allāh, he will find Allāh All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate [wa man ya‘mal sū‘an aw yaḡlim nafsa-hu thumma yastaghfiri ‘llāha yajidi ‘llāha Ghafūran Raḡīmā].”** (Q.4:110)

Allāh (Exalted is He) has also said: **“Then proclaim the praise of your Lord, and seek His forgiveness, for He is Ever-Relenting [fa-sabbih bi-ḡamdi Rabbi-ka wa‘staghfir-h: inna-hu kāna Tawwābā].”** (Q.110:3). He has also said (Exalted is He): **“... and those who seek forgiveness in the watches of the night [wa ‘l-mustaghfirīna bi‘l-ashār].”** (Q.3:17).

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) would often say: **“Glory be to You, O Allāh, and with Your praise! O Allāh, forgive me! You are indeed the Ever-Relenting, the All-Compassionate One!”**<sup>3</sup>

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) also uttered the following sayings:

**“To someone who frequently seeks His forgiveness, Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) grants relief from all troubles, a way out of all distress, and sustenance beyond his expectation.”**<sup>4</sup>

**“I seek forgiveness of Allāh (Exalted is He) and repent to Him, seventy times each day!”**<sup>5</sup> This was despite the fact that he (Allāh bless him and give him peace) had been forgiven his past and future sins.

**“My heart becomes clouded, unless I seek forgiveness of Allāh (Exalted is He) one hundred times each day!”**<sup>6</sup>

**“When a servant commits a sin and says: ‘O Allāh, forgive me,’ Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) says: ‘My servant has committed a sin, and he knows that he has a Lord who punishes sin and forgives sin. O My servant, do as you wish, for I have forgiven you!’”**<sup>7</sup>

**“If someone says three times when he goes to his couch: ‘I seek forgiveness of Allāh the Almighty, other than Whom there is no god, the Ever-Living, the Self-Sustaining, and I repent to Him,’ Allāh will forgive him his sins, even if they are like the foam of the ocean, or as many as the grains of sand of the desert, or as many as the leaves of the trees, or as many as the days of this world.”**<sup>8</sup> According to another tradition, he said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): **“If someone says that, his sins will be forgiven, even if he flees from the army ranks.”**<sup>9</sup>

Hudhaifa said: “I used to speak harshly to my family, so I said: ‘O Messenger of Allāh, I am afraid that my tongue may cause me to enter the Fire of Hell!’ The Prophet then said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): **‘How about seeking forgiveness? I seek forgiveness of Allāh one hundred times each day!’”**<sup>10</sup>

‘Ā’isha said (may Allāh be well pleased with her): “Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) said to me: **‘If you have committed a sin, seek forgiveness of Allāh and repent to Him, for repentance of sin means feeling remorse and seeking forgiveness.’”**<sup>11</sup>

When seeking forgiveness, the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) used to say: **“O Allāh, forgive me my mistakes, my ignorance, my extravagance and what You know better than I. O Allāh, forgive me my frivolity and my over-earnestness, my faults and wrong intentions and all my shortcomings. O Allāh forgive me what I have done in the past and what I shall do in the future, what I have done in secret and what I have done in public, and what You know better than I. You are the Advancer and You are the Postponer, and over all things You are Powerful!”**

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‘Alī said (may Allāh be well pleased with him): “I have been a man who, when he heard a tradition from Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace), would derive as much benefit from it as Allāh willed (Almighty and Glorious is He). When one of his Companions related a tradition to me, I would ask him to swear to its authenticity, and I would trust him once he had sworn. Abū Bakr related to me, and Abū Bakr (may Allāh be well pleased with him) told the truth. He said: ‘I once heard Allāh’s Messenger say (Allāh bless him and give him peace): **“No servant commits a sin, but then performs the ritual purification well, then proceeds to perform two cycles of ritual prayer, then seeks forgiveness of Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), without his being granted forgiveness.”**” Then he recited Allāh’s saying (Almighty and Glorious is He): **“And those who, when they commit an indecency or wrong themselves, remember Allāh and seek forgiveness for their sins ... [wa ’lladhīna idhā fa’alū fāhishatan aw ḡalamū anfusa-hum dhakara ’llāha fa-’staghfarū li-dhunūbi-him ...].”**<sup>12</sup> (Q.3:135).

According to Abū Huraira (may Allāh be well pleased with him), the Prophet said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): **“When the believer commits a sin, a black spot forms on his heart. If he repents and mends his ways and seeks forgiveness, the spot is purged from his heart, but if he goes on sinning, the spot will grow until it covers his heart completely.”**<sup>13</sup> That is the “rust” which Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) has mentioned in His Book: **“No indeed; but what they have been earning has rusted upon their hearts [kallā bal rāna ‘alā qulūbi-him mā kānū yaksibūn].”** (Q.83:14)

Abū Huraira (may Allāh be well pleased with him) also related that the Prophet said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): **“Allāh (Glory be to Him) will surely raise the servant to high rank in the Garden of Paradise, so he will say: ‘O my Lord, how have I deserved this?’ Then He will say (Almighty and Glorious is He): ‘By virtue of your son’s pleading for forgiveness on your behalf.’”**<sup>14</sup>

According to ‘Ā’isha (may Allāh be well pleased with her), the Prophet said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): **“O Allāh, make me one of those who rejoice when they have done a good deed, and who seek forgiveness when they have done something bad!”**<sup>15</sup>

The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) also uttered the following sayings:

**“If the servant commits a sin, so he says: ‘O Allāh, forgive me,’ Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) will say: ‘My servant has committed a sin, but he knows that he has a Lord who takes account of sin and forgives it. O my servant, do what you wish, for I have forgiven you!’”**<sup>16</sup>

**“Someone who seeks forgiveness is not a persistent sinner, even if he lapses seventy times each day.”**<sup>17</sup>

**“A man who has never done a good deed looks heavenward and says: ‘Surely I have a Lord. O Lord, forgive me!’ so Allāh says (Almighty and Glorious is He): ‘I have already forgiven you!’”**<sup>18</sup>

**“Allāh says (Exalted is He): ‘O My servants, you are all sinners, apart from those whom I have pardoned, so seek My forgiveness and I will forgive you. I will gladly forgive anyone who knows that I possess the power to forgive him.’”**<sup>19</sup>

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“If someone says: ‘Glory be to You! I have wronged myself and done something bad, so forgive me, for there is no one to forgive sins but You,’ his sins are forgiven, even if they are like a trail of ants!”<sup>20</sup>

It has been related that the best formula for seeking forgiveness is the following:

**“O Allāh, You are my Lord and I am Your servant whom You have created. I am fulfilling my covenant and promise to You to the best of my ability. I take refuge with You from the evil that I have committed. I acknowledge You as the source of my blessings, and I acknowledge my own responsibility for my sins. I have wronged myself and I confess my sin, so forgive me my past and future sins, for no one forgives all sins except You.”**

Traditional reports [*āthār*] from various early sources:

Khālid ibn Maʿdan said: “Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) says: ‘The dearest of My servants to Me are those who love one another with My love, whose hearts are attached to the mosque, and who seek forgiveness at the break of day. When I intend to punish the people of the earth, I shall remember them, so I shall leave them alone and turn the punishment away from them.’”

Qatāda said (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him): “The Qurʾān points out to you your sickness and your medicine. As for your sickness, it is your sins, and as for your medicine, it is seeking forgiveness.”

ʿAlī said (may Allāh ennoble his countenance): “It is amazing that a person perishes while in possession of the means of safety.” He was asked: “What is it?” He replied: “Seeking forgiveness.” He also used to say: “Allāh (Glory be to Him) does not inspire a servant to seek forgiveness when He intends to punish him.”

Al-Fuḍail said: “As for the servant’s expression: ‘I seek Allāh’s forgiveness,’ the explanation of it is: ‘Let my sins be few!’”

A certain scholar said: “The servant is between sin and grace. Nothing can improve matters except praising Allāh and seeking forgiveness.”

Ar-Rabīʿ ibn Khaitham said (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him): “Beware of saying: ‘I seek Allāh’s forgiveness and I repent to Him,’ for it is a sin and a lie if not acted upon. It is better to say: ‘O Allāh, forgive me and relent toward me!’”

Al-Fuḍail said (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him): “Seeking forgiveness without abstaining from sin is the repentance of liars.”

Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya said (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon her): “Our seeking forgiveness needs abundant seeking forgiveness.”

A wise man said: “To seek forgiveness without feeling remorse is to mock Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He) without being aware of it.”

A Bedouin was heard to say, as he clung to the curtains of the Kaʿba: “O Allāh, I seek Your forgiveness, although I shamefully persist in sin. How could I desist from begging Your forgiveness, when I know how generously You pardon? You bestow such loving kindness upon me, when You have no need of me at all! I offend and anger You so often, although I need You so badly! What a Lord – He fulfills all His promises, yet pardons when He threatens! Insert my tremendous sin into Your tremendous pardon, O Most Merciful of the merciful!”

Abū ʿAbdiʿllāh al-Warrāq said: “Even if your sins are as numerous as raindrops and the flecks of foam on the ocean, they will be erased from you, if Allāh (Exalted is He) so wills, if you offer this supplication to your Lord in all sincerity: ‘O Allāh, I beg Your

forgiveness of every sin, for I have lapsed after turning to You in repentance. I seek Your forgiveness of all the promises that I have made to You, but failed to carry out. I seek Your forgiveness of every action that I intended to perform for Your sake alone, but that I mixed with something other than You. I seek Your forgiveness of every blessing that You have bestowed upon me, but that I employed in disobedience of You. O Knower of the invisible and the visible, I seek Your forgiveness of every sin that I have committed by the light of day and in the darkness of night, in public and in private, in secret and for all to see. O Benevolent One!”

Some say this is the plea for forgiveness offered by Adam (peace be upon him), and some say by Khidr (blessing and peace be upon him).

#### 4. from Book 10

The merit of the night vigil [*qiyām al-lail*]:

As for the relevant Qur’ānic verses, Allāh (Exalted is He) has said:

“Your Lord knows that you keep vigil nearly two-thirds of the night, or half or a third of it, as do a group of those with you ... [*inna Rabba-ka ya‘lamu anna-ka taqūmu adnā min thuluthayi ‘l-laili wa niṣfa-hu wa thulutha-hu wa ṭā’ifatun mina ‘lladhīna ma‘ak...*].” (Q.73:20)

“The first part of the night is indeed the time when impressions are strongest and speech most direct [*inna nāshi‘ata ‘l-laili hiya ashaddu waṭ’anwa aqwamu qilā*].” (Q.73:6)

“Their sides shun their couches, as they call on their Lord in fear and hope [*tatajāfā junūbu-hum ‘ani ‘l-maḍāji‘I yad‘ūna Rabba-hum khawfan wa ṭama‘ā*].” (Q.32:16)

“Is he who devotes the watches of the night to worship, prostrating himself and standing erect, aware of the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord ... [*am-man huwa qānitun ānā‘a ‘l-laili sājidan wa qā‘iman yaḥdharu ‘l-ākhirata wa yarjū raḥmata Rabbi-h ...*].” (Q.39:9)

“And those who spend the night before their Lord, prostrating themselves and standing erect ... [*wa ‘lladhīna yabitūna li-Rabbi-him sujjadan wa qiyāmā ...*].” (Q. 25:64)

“Seek help in patience and ritual prayer ... [*wa ‘sta‘īmū bi’ṣ-ṣabri wa ‘ṣ-ṣalāh ...*].” (Q.2:45)

As for the relevant traditional reports [*akhbār*], they include the following sayings of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace):

“When one of you is sleeping, Satan fastens three knots over the back of his head. On the place of each knot he stamps the seal: ‘There is a long night ahead of you, so stay fast asleep!’ If the sleeper wakes up and remembers Allāh (Exalted is He), one knot will be untied, if he performs the minor ritual ablution, another knot will be untied, and if he performs the ritual prayer, another knot will be untied. He will therefore enter the morning fresh and good-tempered, and otherwise he will enter the morning bad-tempered and sluggish.”<sup>21</sup>

(On hearing about a man who used to sleep all night until he entered the morning): “Satan has urinated in that man’s ear!”<sup>22</sup>

“Satan has a kind of snuff, a kind of syrup and a kind of powder. When he makes the human being use this snuff, he becomes ill-natured, when he administers

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the syrup, he becomes sharply evil-tongued, and when he applies the powder, he sleeps all night until he enters the morning.”<sup>23</sup>

“Two cycles of ritual prayer performed by the servant in the middle of the night are better for him than this world and its contents. Were it not for the hardship it would have inflicted on my Community, I would have made them obligatory.”<sup>24</sup>

In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is stated on the authority of Jābir that the Prophet said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “There is an hour in the night when, if a Muslim servant is in harmony with it and asks Allāh (Exalted is He) for something good, He is sure to grant it to him.” In another version, the wording is: “... asks Allāh (Exalted is He) for something good from this world and the Hereafter, and does that every night.”<sup>25</sup>

According to al-Mughīra ibn Shu‘ba, Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) remained standing until his feet were splitting, so he was asked: “Has not Allāh forgiven you your past and future sins?” He replied: “Should I not be a grateful servant?”<sup>26</sup> What is clearly implicit here is an allusion to increase in degree, for gratitude is the cause of augmentation. In the words of Allāh (Exalted is He): “If you are thankful, I will surely give you more [la-in shakartum la-azīdanna-kum].” (Q.14:7)

The Prophet said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “O Abū Huraira, do you wish to enjoy Allāh’s mercy in life and in death, in the tomb and at the Resurrection? Then get up at night and perform the ritual prayer! Do you wish for your Lord’s approval, O Abū Huraira? Then pray in the corners of your house, for your house will become as radiant in heaven as the light of the planets and stars is to the people of this world!”<sup>27</sup>

He also said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “It is incumbent upon you to observe night vigil, for it was the practice of your righteous predecessors. Night vigil brings us close to Allāh (Almighty and Glorious is He), atones for our sins, drives disease from the body, and puts a stop to transgression.”<sup>28</sup>

He also said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “Whenever a man is overtaken by sleep while performing ritual prayer at night, the reward for his ritual prayer is recorded to his credit, and his sleep is reckoned as a charitable donation.”<sup>29</sup>

He said (Allāh bless him and give him peace) to Abū Dharr: “If I were intending to make a journey, would I get provisions ready for it?” “Yes,” said he, so he asked him: “Well, Abū Dharr, how about the journey on the way to the Hereafter? Shall I not tell you what will be useful to you on that day?” “Of course,” he replied, “for you are more to me than my father and my mother!” Then he told him: “Fast on a very hot day, in preparation for the Day of Resurrection, perform two cycles of ritual prayer, in readiness for the desolation of the tomb, perform a Pilgrimage, for portentous events, and perform an act of charity, by giving alms to a pauper, by speaking a word of truth, or by subjecting a word of evil to silence!”<sup>30</sup>

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It is related that, in the time of the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), there was a man who, when others took to their couches and closed their eyes, would get up to perform the ritual prayer and recite the Qurʾān, saying: “O Lord of the Fire of Hell, deliver me from it!” When this was mentioned to the Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace), he said: “Notify me when this happens!” Then he came to the man and heard for himself. When morning came, he said to him: “O So-and-so, have you not asked Allāh for the Garden of Paradise?” He replied: “O Messenger of Allāh, I am not there, nor do my deeds amount to that!” Shortly after this, Gabriel (peace be upon him) descended and said: “Tell So-and-so that Allāh has already delivered him from the Fire of Hell and admitted him to the Garden of Paradise!”

It is further related that Gabriel said (peace be upon him): “Ibn ʿUmar would be such a good man, if only he would perform ritual prayer at night!” The Prophet (Allāh bless him and give him peace) informed him of this, and from then on he always observed night vigil.”

Nāfiʿ said: “Ibn ʿUmar would perform the ritual prayer during the night, then say: ‘O Nāfiʿ, is it time for the pre-dawn meal?’ When I said: ‘No,’ he would resume his prayers. Then he would ask me again, and when I said: ‘Yes,’ he would sit down and seek forgiveness of Allāh (Exalted is He), until the dawn broke.”

ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib said: “Yaḥyā the son of Zakariyā (peace be upon them both) ate his fill of barley-bread, then went to sleep without performing his litany. When the morning came, Allāh (Exalted is He) conveyed to him by inspiration: ‘O Yaḥyā, have you found a dwelling better than My dwelling, or have you found a neighborhood better than My neighborhood? By My Might and My Majesty, O Yaḥyā, if you took one look at Paradise, your fat would melt and your soul would expire from yearning, while if you took one look at Hell, your fat would melt and you would weep pus after tears and wear leather after haircloth!’”

Allāh’s Messenger (Allāh bless him and give him peace) was told: “So-and-so performs the ritual prayer during the night, and in the morning he steals.” He said: “His good conduct will cause him to desist!”<sup>31</sup>

The Prophet said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “Allāh bestows His mercy on a man who gets up in the night and performs the ritual prayer, then wakes up his wife to perform the ritual prayer, sprinkling water on her face if she is unwilling.”<sup>32</sup> He also said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “Allāh bestows His mercy on a wife who gets up in the night and performs the ritual prayer, then wakes up her husband to perform the ritual prayer, sprinkling water on his face if he is unwilling.”<sup>33</sup> He also said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “If someone gets up at night and arouses his wife, then they perform two cycles of ritual prayer, they will be recorded among the men and the women who remember Allāh very often.”<sup>34</sup>

He also said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “The most meritorious ritual prayer, after that which is prescribed, is the night vigil.”<sup>35</sup>

According to ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allāh be well pleased with him), the Prophet also said (Allāh bless him and give him peace): “If someone goes to sleep without reciting his *ḥizb* [60<sup>th</sup> part of the Qurʾān], or part of it, and then recites it in the period

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**between the dawn ritual prayer and the noon ritual prayer, it will be recorded in his favor as if he had recited it at night.”** <sup>36</sup>

As for the relevant *āthār* [traditions of the Companions and their successors], they include the following:

It is reported that ‘Umar (may Allāh be well pleased with him) would pass by the Qur’ānic verse of his night litany, so he would collapse. He would therefore be visited for many days, just as the invalid would be.

When others’ eyes were at rest, Ibn Mas‘ūd (may Allāh be well pleased with him) would get up, then a droning sound like the droning of the bees could be heard from him until he entered the morning.

It is said that Sufyān ath-Thawrī (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) ate his fill one night, saying: “When the donkey gets extra fodder, it works all the harder!” Then he kept vigil that night until he entered the morning.

When Ṭā’ūs (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) reclined on his mattress, he would feel as restless as peas in a frying-pan, so we would jump up and perform ritual prayer until morning. Then he would say: “The recollection of Hell sends the sleep of the worshipful flying!”

Al-Ḥasan said (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him): “We know of no harder act of piety than enduring the night and expending this wealth.” He was asked: “How is it that those who observe the prayers of night vigil are among the people with the most beautiful faces?” To this he replied: “Because they commune with the All-Merciful and He clothes them in light from His light.”

A certain righteous man came home from his travels. His mattress was laid out for him and he fell asleep on it, so he missed his litanies. He swore that he would never again sleep on a mattress!

‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Rawwād used to go to his mattress when night had fallen, saying as he stroked it with his hand: “You are soft indeed, but by Allāh, there is one softer than you in the Garden of Paradise!” He would then spend the whole night performing ritual prayer.

Al-Fuḍail said: “I approach the night at the outset, and the length of it appalls me. Then I start on the Qur’ān, and the morning arrives before I have satisfied my ravenous appetite!”

Al-Ḥasan said (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him): “A man commits a sin, and because of it he is deprived of night vigil.”

Al-Fuḍail said: “If you are incapable of keeping night vigil and fasting in the daytime, you should know that you are under interdiction because of your many faults.”

Ṣila ibn Ashīm (may Allāh bestow His mercy upon him) used to perform ritual prayer throughout the night. Shortly before dawn, he would say: “O my God, it is not for the likes of me to ask for the Garden Paradise, but save me by Your mercy from the Fire of Hell!”

A man said to one of the wise: “I am really too weak to keep night vigil,” so the wise man told him: “O my brother, do not disobey Allāh (Exalted is He), and do not keep night vigil!”

Al-Ḥasan ibn Ṣāliḥ had a slave-girl, whom he sold to some people. This slave-girl got up in the middle of the night, crying: “O people of the house! The ritual prayer, the ritual prayer!” They said: “Is it morning already? Has the dawn broken?” She said: “Do you mean to say that you only observe the five set ritual prayers?” When they said:

“Yes,” she went back to al-Ḥasan, saying: “O my master, would you sell me to people who only observe the set ritual prayers? Take me back!” He therefore took her back.

Ar-Rabī‘ said: “I spent many nights in the house of ash-Shāfi‘ī (may Allāh be well pleased with him), and he never slept during more than a very short part of the night.”

Abu’l-Juwairiyya said: “I kept company with Abū Ḥanīfa (may Allāh be well pleased with him) for six months, and there was not one occasion, in all that time, when he laid his side on the ground.”

Abū Ḥanīfa used to stay awake half the night, but as he was passing by some people, he heard them say: “This man stays awake the whole night,” so he retorted: “I am ashamed to be credited with something I do not do!” From then on, he took to staying awake all night long. It is also related that he had no bedding for the night.

They say that Mālik ibn Dīnār (may Allāh be well pleased with him) spent the whole night through until morning, repeating this Qur’ānic verse: **“Or do those who commit bad deeds suppose that We shall make them like those who believe and do good works, the same in their life and their death? Bad is their judgment [am ḥasiba ‘lladhīna ‘jtarahu ‘s-sayyi‘āti an naj‘ala-hum ka-‘lladhīna āmanū wa ‘amilu ‘ṣ-ṣāliḥāti sawā’an maḥyā-hum wa mamātu-hum : sā’a mā yaḥkumūn]!”** (Q.45:21)

Al-Mughīra ibn Ḥabīb said: “I noticed Mālik ibn Dīnār performing the minor ritual ablution after the late-evening ritual prayer, then he went and stood at his place of prayer. He grasped his beard and began to say, while choking with tears: ‘Preserve Mālik’s gray hairs, my God, from the Fire of Hell! You know the inhabitant of the inhabitant of the Garden of Paradise from the inhabitant of the Fire of Hell, so which of the two is Mālik?’ He went on saying this until the break of day.

Mālik ibn Dīnār also said: “I went to sleep one night, forgetting my litanies. In my dreams, I found myself with a most beautiful girl. In her hand she held a piece of paper, and she asked me: ‘Can you read well?’ When I told her I could, she handed me the paper, on which these lines of poetry were written:

Have pleasures and desires distracted you  
from Paradise with maidens fair and sweet?  
There you will dwell eternally and sport  
with all the lovely ladies you will meet.  
From dreams awake and – better far than sleep –  
recite the Qur’ān until the dawn you greet!”

It is said that when Masrūq went on Pilgrimage, he spent every night prostrating himself in worship.

It is also related, on the authority of Azhar ibn Mughīth, who was one of the constant devotees, that he said: “In my dream, I saw a woman unlike the women of this world, so I said to her: ‘Who are you?’ She replied: ‘One of the maidens of Paradise,’ so I said: ‘Marry me!’ She said: ‘Present your proposal to my Master, and pay me my dower!’ When I asked: ‘What is your dower?’ she replied: ‘Prolonged observance of night vigil.’”

Yūsuf ibn Mihrān said: “I have heard that beneath the Heavenly Throne there is an angel in the shape of a cock. Its talons consist of pearl and its spurs of green topaz. When the first third of the night has elapsed, it flaps its wings, crows and says: ‘Let those who keep vigil arise!’ Then, when two thirds of the night have elapsed, it once again flaps its wings, crows and says: ‘Let those who perform ritual prayer arise!’ Finally, when dawn breaks, it flaps its wings, crows and says: ‘Let the heedless arise, bearing the weight of their sins!’”

They say that Wahb ibn Munabbih al-Yamānī never laid his side on the ground in thirty years, and that he used to say: “I would rather see a devil in my house than a pillow, for that is an invitation to sleep!” He had a leather cushion, on which he would

place his breast when sleep overpowered him. After nodding a few times, he would then make haste to perform the ritual prayer.

One of them said: "I saw the Lord of Glory in a dream, and I heard Him say: 'By My Glory and My Majesty, I shall surely honor the abode of Sulaimān at-Taimī, for he has performed the ritual prayer for Me each morning for forty years, without breaking his minor ritual ablution for the late-evening prayer.'" He is said to have held the view that, when sleep penetrates the heart, it invalidates the minor ritual ablution.

In one of the ancient Scriptures, these words are attributed to Allāh (Exalted is He): "My servant who is truly My servant is the one who does not wait for the cock to crow, before he gets up."