

THE RULING ON
DELAYING THE
SALAH

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The Ruling on Delaying the Salāh

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



I have dear people to me who delay the Salawāt. Can you give some advice to them pertaining to that?

Delaying the Salawāt refers to two things:

Delaying the Salāh Within its Time Frame

Delaying the Salāh within its time frame, and there's no sin in that inshā'Allāh. What we mean by 'in its time frame' is the acceptable time of the Salāh. Each Salāh has a beginning time and then an expiration time. It's like a grace period time. It's mentioned in several Ahādīth and among them is Hadīth Abu Mūsā Al-Ash'ari, that's in Sahīh Muslim, where a Sahābi asked the Messenger ﷺ about the timing of the Salawāt, and so the Messenger ﷺ one day made the Salawāt at their earliest times. The following day he performed the Salawāt right before their timing was to expire. For example, Salāt Al-Fajr starts at pre-dawn. The Messenger ﷺ performed it at its earliest beginning time. The following day he performed Fajr right before its time was about to expire, which is right before sunrise. Likewise, Dhuhr, for example. It starts when the sun passes its zenith and its timing ends right before 'Asr is about to come in. The Messenger ﷺ performed the Salawāt one day at their earliest time, the earliest starting time. The following day he performed the Salawāt right before their time was about to expire, and then he told the Sahābi who questioned him that this is the timing of the Salawāt. The timing of the Salawāt is performed between these two times. So there is some flexibility in the timing of the Salawāt. Delaying the Salāh within those time frames is permissible.

It's not recommended to habitually delay the Salāh to the end of its permissible time. There are no *sins* in doing so. One should be eager to hasten a deed that's most beloved to Allāh ﷺ. When the Messenger ﷺ was asked which deed is most beloved to Allāh ﷺ, he said offering the Salāh on its proper time.

سُئِلَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى؟ قَالَ "الصَّلَاةُ عَلَى وَقْتِهِ"

I asked the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ): "Which action is dearest to Allāh?" He (ﷺ) replied, "Performing As-Salāt (the prayer) at its earliest fixed time."¹

In fact, Salāh on its time in that Hadīth was given precedent over Jihād. In another narration that's in Sunan Abu Dāwūd, when the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was asked, which of the actions is best, he said, "*Observing the Salāh at its earliest time.*" In that narration in Sunan Abu Dāwūd, it specifically mentions Salāh at its earliest time.

الصَّلَاةُ فِي أَوَّلِ وَقْتِهِ

Observing prayer early in its period.²

سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى Salāh at its earliest time is your ticket to Firdaws. We ask Allāh ﷺ day and night to grant us Firdaws. That's your ticket to Firdaws.

¹ Bukhāri: 5970

² Abi Dāwūd: 426

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَوةِهِمْ يَحَافِظُونَ

And they who carefully maintain their prayers.

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَرِثُونَ

Those are the inheritors.

الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفَرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Who will inherit Al-Firdaws. They will abide therein eternally.³

Those who guard their Salawāt. What's their reward? They'll inherit Firdaws forever. Some of the Mufassirīn said يَحَافِظُونَ means guarding the Salāh at its earliest time.

There are details where sometimes it may be better to delay the Salāh within its time frame, like Ishā', when it's delayed to the middle of the night within some certain circumstances, but that's a Fiqh issue, a side Fiqh issue.

Delaying Salāh Outside the Time Frame

The second form of delaying is a dangerous one. The danger, *all* the danger, is in neglecting the time frame of the Salawāt, letting the grace period pass, letting the time of the Salāh expire while not performing the Salāh, with no legitimate Shar'ī reason. Letting Salāt Al-Fajr pass until the sun rises with no

³ Al-Mu'minūn: 9-11

legitimate Sharī'ī reason. One can wake up every single day for a job — if Fajr falls within that time frame, he'll pray fajr on time — but if the sun rises at 7 a.m. and he wakes up for his job at 8, he'll miss the Fajr.

Back in 2013, I said, *"You see those athletic, young weightlifters able to bench press hundreds of pounds, but they can't remove that two-pound blanket off their chest to wake up and perform the Salāh. And you see some elderly, who may be ill, who can't even carry a few pounds, lift that blanket and never miss Takbīrat Al-Ihrām behind the Imām in Jamā'ah. The strength is in the Īmān."*

If one misses the timing of the Salāh because he's excused, inshā'Allāh he will not be sinful. Such as randomly — *randomly* — forgetting, *randomly* sleeping through a Salāh, or someone who may be traveling, combining between the Salawāt.

مَنْ نَسِيَ صَلَاةً أَوْ نَامَ عَنْهَا فَكَفَّارَتْهَا أَنْ يُصْلِّيَهَا إِذَا ذَكَرَهَا

The expiation for one who forgets the Salāh or sleeps through it, is to perform that Salāh when that individual remembers it.⁴

Habitually sleeping through the Salawāt is negligence, that's not excused. Someone who habitually spends his nights browsing the internet or staying up with friends, and then 10 minutes before Fajr, the Shaytān comes to him — as he usually does — and puts him to sleep, and then he misses the Fajr, and thinks he's excused for that every single day? More astonishing than that is something I heard, where a husband tells his wife "*I'm going to sleep*" minutes before the Salāh is about to come in, he says "*Don't wake me up because I'm excused for sleeping through the Salāh.*" In Sahīh Muslim, when the Messenger ﷺ laid down

⁴ Muslim: 684c

to rest if it was right before Fajr, he would take precautions. He would stretch his forearm and place his head on his palm .

وَإِذَا عَرَسَ قَبْلَ الصُّبْحِ نَصَبَ ذِرَاعَهُ وَوَضَعَ رَأْسَهُ عَلَى كَفِهِ

and when he lay down for rest before the dawn, he used to stretch his forearm and place his head over his palm.⁵

So if he sleeps, it'll be light sleep and he'll wake up. And every time I remember or mention this Hadīth, I also remember when I was around 5 years old, I would ask my mother, may Allāh سبحانه وتعالى grant her Firdaws, to sleep in my dark room, and then I would look at her while she's sleeping, she'd have her arm outstretched and her head would be in her palm, and I would keep telling her to put her forearm and hand down and sleep right. She said, *"I have work to finish. Once you go to sleep, I'm going to go finish that work."* May Allāh سبحانه وتعالى grant her Firdaws. When you lay like that, you're either not going to go to sleep, or if you do, it's going to be light sleep where you wake up. So RasūlAllāh ﷺ laid like that if he slept before Fajr, taking precautions so that he would not miss Fajr.

You need to take precaution in organizing your lifestyle and your time so as to not miss Salāh — [such as] sleeping right after Ishā', Adhkār, and setting the alarm clock. Ibn Hazm attributed to 17 of the Sahābah, and 'Abdullāh Ibn Al-Mubārak and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and Ishāq Ibn Rāhaway, that whoever leaves a Salāh purposely, without a legitimate excuse, until its time lapses, **then he's a Kāfir.** Al-Khattābi added to that [list] Ibrāhīm An-Nakha'i.

More than 25 years ago, at the University of Michigan, I gave detailed classes — it was actually a series — and we analyzed the opinions and proofs on whether one who leaves or abandons the Salāh is a Kāfir or not, and we spoke on

⁵ Muslim: 683

what constitutes abandoning the Salāh. Even though it's a minority opinion among the four Imāms — and after all those years, and as time goes by, you acquire more knowledge, you do more research — it only made me more firm, more confident, of the opinion I held back then, that one who leaves **one** Salāh until its time expires, for no legitimate Sharī'ī reason, **he's not a Muslim.**

Back in the 80s, when we visited Bilād Al-Haramayn — and we did so many times, aside from the years that we studied there — around the mid-80s or so on one of the trips, we were invited as guests in Ibn Bāz's house. We spent several months with him. We spent some time in his house in At-Tā'if, where he spent most of the summer, and then we went with him to Makkah in his entourage and in his own personal car to perform Hajj. And of course, the women were in the cars behind. In that trip, my mother — may Allāh سبحانه وتعالى grant her Firdaws — became very acquainted with the wife of Ibn Bāz who performed Hajj that year, Umm 'Abdullāh رحمة الله عليها, whether she's dead or alive. I'm not sure if she's dead or alive. They became very close and they remained in contact for years and years after that. May Allāh سبحانه وتعالى have mercy on both. My mother once told me that Umm 'Abdullāh told her that when Ibn Bāz would wake up his children or helpers for Fajr, if they'd give him a hard time. He would tell them, "*WAllāhi, if you don't get up, I will take you to the court and have a verdict of Riddah (apostasy) established on you.*" And that's because he held the Fiqh opinion that missing a single Salāh until its time passes, for no legitimate Sharī'ah excuse is Kufr.

Of course, there are other opinions on that. This is not a Fiqh class to analyze the opinions on whether one who leaves the Salawāt is a Kāfir or not and what constitutes leaving the Salawāt, but let's assume you don't adopt this opinion. Let's assume you don't adopt this opinion. The fact that it's a matter that's considered Kufr by some Sahābah and some Ulamā' is mighty and terrifying, even if you don't accept that opinion. That in and of itself shows that it can't be taken lightly. Let's assume you don't adopt that opinion. The most lenient opinion on this matter is that it's a major sin. Is that something you want to meet Allāh سبحانه وتعالى with?

مَنْ تَرَكَ صَلَاةَ الْعَصْرِ فَقَدْ حَبَطَ عَمَلُهُ

He who misses the 'Asr Salāh, his deeds will be rendered null and void.⁶

When you leave Salāt Al-'Asr, your deeds will be annulled, and among the interpretations of that Hadīth is what Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمه الله تعالى said, that the deeds for the entire day will be annulled for that one Salāh.

نَفَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَتَ فَسُوفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غَيَّاً

But they were succeeded by generations who neglected prayer and followed their lusts and so will soon face the evil consequences.⁷

They were succeeded by a generation who neglected their Salawāt. So they'll be thrown in Ghayyā. Ibn Mas'ūd said, أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ, neglected the Salāt, is not abandoning and completely leaving the Salāh totally, it's *delaying* the Salāh until its time expires. Sa'īd Ibn Al-Musayyib said about أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ, it's one who performs the Dhuhr after the time of 'Asr comes in, and performs — *performs*, meaning he's not abandoning the Salāh, he actually performs it — [delays] performing the Maghrib until after Ishā' comes in. He said whoever dies doing that, not repenting, is promised Ghayyā from Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. A severe punishment in a deep valley in Jahannam, والعياذ بالله.

⁶ Bukhāri: 553

⁷ Maryam: 59

And Ghayyā may also be a punishment in Dunyā. Ibn ‘Abbās said it's failure. Qatādah said it's evil. With no Salāh, there are always problems in every aspect of that individual's life, and then the ultimate punishment in the Āakhirah. Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه said Ghayyā is a deep valley in Jahannam that has blood and puss in it. Musnad Abi Ya'la, the son of Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqās, asked his father about the verse,

فَوْيَلٌ لِّلْمُعْصِلِينَ

So woe to those who pray

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

[But] who are heedless of their prayer.⁸

What does it mean? What does سَاهُونَ mean? سَاهُونَ means 'unmindful' or 'heedless' or 'inattentive'. His son said, "It's rare that anyone can avoid that in his Salāh." Which one of us doesn't have سَاهُونَ in his Salāh? He understood it to be unmindful in the Salāh. His father said, "It's not that. It's one who neglects the timing of the Salāh until it passes, until it expires." And the linguistic terms within the verse support that meaning, because the verse says negligent of the Salāh, it doesn't say negligent in their Salāh. Negligent of their Salāh, which goes to support that it's abandoning or neglecting the Salāh and its timing.

فَوْيَلٌ لِّلْمُعْصِلِينَ

⁸ Al-Mā'ūn: 4-5

So woe to those who pray

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

[But] who are heedless of their prayer.⁹

Wayl is for them, a punishment in Jahannam, وَالْعِيَادُ بِاللَّهِ.

In Sahīh Al-Bukhāri, the dream that the Messenger ﷺ had, and he explained that dream. He saw someone whose head was being crushed with a stone. Why did he get that punishment? Because he learned the Qur'ān and never acted on it and he ignored — he slept through — the Salawāt, ignoring their timing.

عَمَّا الرَّجُلُ الْأَوَّلُ الَّذِي أَتِيَتْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْغُو رَأْسَهُ بِالْحَجَرِ، فَإِنَّهُ الرَّجُلُ يَأْخُذُ الْقُرْآنَ فَيَرْفَضُهُ وَيَنْامُ

عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ الْمُكْتُوبَةِ

As for the first man you came upon whose head was being injured with the rock, he is the symbol of the one who studies the Qur'ān and then neither recites it nor acts on its orders, and sleeps, neglecting the enjoined prayers.¹⁰

Let's say you're not a student of knowledge, you don't know about that — whether he's Muslim or he's not Muslim. How can you strip your life of Barakah, being negligent in delaying the Salāh?

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Bukhāri: 7047

It's darkness, darkness to your life. Leaving out and not guarding the Salāh is darkness to your face and to your life. Leaving out the Salāh strips the Noor out of one's face. It deprives one's Du'ā from being answered. Muslims need to start feeling the honor of meeting Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى in Salāh and looking forward to it. We talked about that in the Tafsīr class. Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى permits you and allows you and wants you to knock on his door and have a meeting with Him, and you choose to delay that meeting or neglect it altogether. Whatever it is you're going through, the solution is in your Salāh. We can't even count the number of times someone tells us, "*We were struggling with an issue*", whether it may be big or small, "*When the Salāh timing came, we dropped everything and headed to the Salāh. We came back and that matter either became easy or it was solved altogether.*" There's nothing on the face of this earth worthy of you delaying the first deed that you will be questioned about when you stand before Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى. If it's sound, you're saved and successful. If not, you're among those who are miserable، وَالْعَيَّاذُ بِاللَّهِ.

أَوْلَى مَا يُحَاسَبُ عَلَيْهِ الْعَبْدُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ الصَّلَاةُ، إِنْ صَلَحَتْ فَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ وَأَنْجَحَ، وَإِنْ

فَسَدَتْ فَقَدْ خَابَ وَخَسَرَ

The first of man's deeds for which he will be called to account on the Day of Resurrection will be Salat. If it is found to be perfect, he will be safe and successful; but if it is incomplete, he will be unfortunate and a loser.

In Musnad Ahmad,

مَنْ حَفَظَ عَلَيْهَا كَانَتْ لَهُ نُورًا وَبَرَهَانًا وَنَجَاهًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يُحَافِظْ عَلَيْهَا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ بَرَهَانٌ
وَلَا نُورٌ وَلَا نَجَاهٌ وَكَانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَعَ قَارُونَ وَهَامَانَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَأَبِي بَنْ خَلْفٍ

The one who guards the Salāh and its timing and protects it and perfects it, it will be brightness and light and evidence and salvation for him Yawm Al-Qiyāmah. And if he doesn't guard it and protect it, it won't be light and evidence and brightness and salvation for him Yawm Al-Qiyāmah, and he will be associated (والعياذ بالله) in Jahannam with Qārūn, Fir'awn, Hāmān and 'Ubayy Ibn Khalf.

Some said that he's going to be with Qārūn if his wealth occupied him from Salāh, because Qārūn was a man of wealth. If it's his positions and jobs that kept him from Salāh, he resembles Fir'awn, so he'll be with Fir'awn. If he is a minister or a henchman and that occupied him from Salāh, he resembles Hāmān, so he will be with Hāmān. If he's a businessman, a merchant, and that occupied him from Salāh, then he resembles 'Ubayy Ibn Khalf and he will be with him, والعياذ بالله.

Take it from a Targhīb perspective. You have a wife or a brother in Islām. You go out of your way doing the Mubāh that you know makes them happy. Rabb Al-'Ālamīn says the most beloved of deeds to Allāh is Salāh on its proper time. Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى tells you and teaches us the most beloved deed is the Salāh on its time. What kind of a life does one who doesn't make responding to the call of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى expect to have?

Times and events and gatherings should be scheduled around Salāh. “I need to take a lunch break”, you tie that to Salāh — “I'll go before, so I won't miss the Salāh, or I'll go after.” Likewise, I'm going to go grocery shopping — it should be tied around the Salāh. “I'll go before, I'll go after, or I know there's a place there where I can perform my Salāh.”

Ibn Hajar Al-Haytami related a story — I'm not sure of its authenticity, but he attributed the story to the Salaf. He said someone buried a sister, and while he was burying his sister, he had a pouch of gold in his pocket that fell in the grave without him knowing. When he left the grave, he noticed that pouch missing. So he went back to re-dig the grave to get the pouch, only to find a blazing fire as he was digging. He returned the dirt and ran to his mother crying, and he asked her and he told her what he saw. She said, *“The only thing I know is that she was delaying her Salawāt.”*

One should have some shame from Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى. The Creator, The Sustainer, appointed a time when He wants you to meet Him. He wants you on those specific times, yet you occupy your time with something else. How can you be occupied with something other than meeting Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى at a time when Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى wants you to meet Him? How can one be occupied with the worthless Dunyā in errands while Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى calls you to a meeting? Allāh, Al-Ghaniyy, the All-Rich, wants you, the poor one, to come to Him in a special meeting and you avoid it or delay it? Would you do that with a boss or a leader or a king or a president or a Shaykh? Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى wants you to express your grief and your sorrow to Him and to put your mind at peace and ease throughout the day yet you choose misery for yourself.

Delaying the Salāh is delaying and obstructing Dunyā matters that you're trying to accomplish, if they're delayed on the expense of the Salāh times. Salāh is intertwined with Dunyā and Āakhirah success. Success of marriage, income, health, wealth, business, family — it's all based on Salāh. Don't we say, Hayy 'Ala Al-Falāh? What does Hayy 'Ala Al-Falāh mean? **Come to success. Life is a failure without Salāh on its time.**