

Birr al-Wālidayn

BEING DUTIFUL TO PARENTS



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IBN ISMĀ'ĪL AL-BUKHĀRĪ

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﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا﴾

*Chapter: The speech of Allah the Exalted:
'And We instructed Man to be good to his
parents.' Qur'an (31:14)*

HADITH 1

عن أَبِي عَمْرٍو الشَّيْبَانِيِّ يَقُولُ: أَخْبَرَنَا صَاحِبُ هَذِهِ الدَّارِ، وَأَوْمَأَ بِيَدِهِ إِلَى دَارِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ يَعْنِي ابْنَ مَسْعُودٍ رضي الله عنه قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى؟ قَالَ: الصَّلَاةُ عَلَى وَقْتِهَا، قُلْتُ: ثُمَّ أَيُّ؟ قَالَ: ثُمَّ بِرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ، قُلْتُ: ثُمَّ أَيُّ؟ قَالَ: الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي بِهِنَّ، فَلَوْ اسْتَزِدْتُهُ لَزَادَنِي.

Abū ‘Amr ash-Shaybānī said, ‘The owner of this house informed us,’ and he pointed with his hand to the house of ‘Abdullāh, referring to Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه, ‘I asked the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, ‘Which action is most beloved to Allah the Exalted?’ He replied, ‘Prayer performed on time.’ I asked, ‘Then what?’ He said, ‘Then being dutiful to parents.’ I asked, ‘Then what?’ He said, ‘Jihad in the path of Allah.’” He [Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه] said, “He related these things to me, and if I had asked him further, he would have told me more.”¹

عَنِ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ رضي الله عنه قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: أَفْضَلُ الْأَعْمَالِ أَوْ الْعَمَلِ
الصَّلَاةُ لَوَقْتِهَا وَبِرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ.

Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه narrates, ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The most virtuous of deeds (or: the most virtuous deed) is the prayer performed on time and being dutiful to parents.”²

HADITH 3

عَنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ رضي الله عنه قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: أَفْضَلُ الْعَمَلِ الصَّلَاةُ لَوَقْتِهَا
وَالْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ.

‘Abdullāh [Ibn Mas‘ūd] رضي الله عنه narrates, ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The most virtuous deed is the prayer performed on time and jihad in the path of Allah.” *Shu‘ab al-Īmān* (3910).

HADITH 4

عَنِ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ رضي الله عنه قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ: أَيُّ الْأَعْمَالِ أَفْضَلُ؟ قَالَ:
الصَّلَاةُ وَبِرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، وَلَوْ اسْتَرَدَدْتُهُ لَزَادَنِي.

Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه narrates, ‘I asked the Prophet ﷺ, “Which actions are most virtuous?” He said, “The prayer [performed on time], being dutiful to parents and jihad in the path of Allah.” And if I had asked further, he would have told me more.’ *Musnad Aḥmad* (3973), *Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr* (9817, 9818).

Commentary: Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393) has provided an elaborate explanation of these narrations in *Fatḥh al-Bārī* (4:211), concluding that from the rights of Allah upon His servants, prayer (*ṣalāh*) is the most virtuous; from the rights of servants to each

other, being dutiful to parents is the most virtuous; and from the optional deeds, jihad is the most virtuous. The hadith, therefore, encompasses all three facets of the Faith. Indeed, ‘Allāmah Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) suggests there is scholarly consensus on the obligation of being dutiful to parents. (*Al-Ādāb ash-Shar‘iyyah*, 1:437)

‘Allāmah Ibn Baṭṭāl (d. 449/1057) suggests in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (2:157) that the mention of dutifulness to parents alongside *ṣalāh* demonstrates its importance and virtue. He further draws a comparison with the verse of the Qur’an wherein Allah Almighty says:

﴿أَنْ أَشْكُرَ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ﴾

Be grateful to Me and to both your parents. Qur’an (31:14).

‘Allāmah Ibn Baṭṭāl, at another juncture, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 9:188. makes reference to the verse of the Qur’an wherein Allah Almighty says:

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا﴾

And your Lord has commanded that you shall not worship anyone but Him, and show kindness to parents. Qur’an (17:23).

It is worth noting that some hadiths on the most virtuous or most beloved act to Allah appear contradictory, as some make reference to being dutiful to parents, the performance of prayer on time and jihad, whilst others suggest the remembrance of Allah and Hajj. Various explanations have been offered by hadith experts to reconcile the narrations. One explanation is that the Prophet ﷺ provided different answers to different Companions on account of their individual circumstance; for example, Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ had a mother. Alternatively, the different answers were provided to address the specific need of the Muslims at the time, such as jihad;

or because the time of the year, such as the Hajj season, necessitated a different answer. (*Al-Kawākib ad-Dirārī*, 4:182; *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 2:9).

¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (527, 2782, 5970), *Al-Adab al-Mufrad* (1), *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (85).

² *Ibid.*

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