BLESSINGS AND TRIALS

The Secret Reward Behind Gratitude and Patience



HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON
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The Secret Reward Behind Gratitude and Patience

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

"And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe."

SURAH IBRAHIM 14:7

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord who gives blessings without being asked and tests in order to purify. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the most grateful of servants when given and the most patient when tested.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

You are among the greatest blessings Allah has granted me. May Allah make us all *'abdan shakura* — grateful servants.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover shows two scenes meeting in the middle. On the left, a dark grey sky is covered with storm clouds and pouring rain — a symbol of **trials** that come uninvited. An old tree stands on a rocky bank; its branches bend in the strong wind but do not break, because its great roots grip the earth firmly. That is the symbol of a believer's **patience**: shaken, but not toppled.

On the right, a golden sky shines over a lush garden. Its branches are laden with pomegranates, oranges and clusters of dates, while green grass stretches along the riverbank — a symbol of **blessings**, reminding us of the two fertile gardens of the people of Saba' (Surah Saba' 34:15). Rainwater from the left flows into a clear river running to the garden on the right — a sign that a trial borne with patience nurtures reward, and that with hardship comes ease (Surah Ash-Sharh 94:5–6).

In the centre stands a gateway shaped like a mihrab, decorated with Islamic geometric patterns and glowing with golden light, with a rainbow arching above it across both scenes. The gateway symbolises **gratitude and patience** — two paths that bring a servant back to Allah, whether in storm or in sunshine. The whole image carries one message: "How wonderful is the affair of the believer, for all of his affairs are good" (Sahih Muslim, No. 2999).

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Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; blue box = scientific finding; grey box = athar / sayings of scholars. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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BLESSINGS AND TRIALS

THE SECRET REWARD BEHIND GRATITUDE AND PATIENCE

No human being's life consists only of blessings, and none consists only of trials. This morning we are healthy; this evening we may have a fever. This year provision is abundant; next year it may be tight. Today we celebrate a birth; tomorrow we may visit a death. Life in this world alternates between **blessings** and **trials** — and both, according to the Qur'an, are **tests**:

SURAH AL-ANBIYA' 21:35

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ ٱلْمَوْتِ ۗ وَنَبْلُوكُم بِٱلشَّرِّ وَٱلْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً ۖ وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

Every soul will taste death. And We test you with evil and with good as trial; and to Us you will be returned.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/21:35

Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما explained this verse saying: "We test you with hardship and ease, health and sickness, wealth and poverty, the lawful and the unlawful, obedience and disobedience, guidance and misguidance." This explanation is quoted by **Imam Ibn Kathir**. In other words, wealth is not a sign of Allah's love, and poverty is not a sign of His hatred; both are different exam questions. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 21:35

The question is not *what* befalls us, but *how* we receive it. Allah teaches a balanced attitude — not carried away with joy when given, and not drowned in grief when something is taken:

SURAH AL-HADID 57:22–23

مَآ أَصَابَ مِن مُّصِيبَةٍ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِىٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِى كِتَٰبٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَن نَّبْرَأَهَآ ۚ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register before We bring it into being - indeed that, for Allah, is easy.

لِّكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا۟ عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا۟ بِمَآ ءَاتَىٰكُمْ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ﴿٢٣﴾

In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you. And Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/57:22-23

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'Ikrimah, the student of Ibn 'Abbas, summed up this verse beautifully: "There is no one who does not feel joy and sorrow. But make your joy **gratitude**, and make your sorrow **patience**." Tafsir Ibn Kathir 57:23

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah wrote a whole book on this theme entitled *'Uddat al-Sabirin wa Dhakhirat al-Shakirin* (The Provision of the Patient and the Treasure of the Grateful). In it he stresses that **faith has two halves: half patience and half gratitude**. A believer is always between a blessing that calls for gratitude and a trial that calls for patience — so he never leaves the state of worship.

Here lies the **secret reward** that is the theme of this eBook. A blessing met with gratitude increases (Surah Ibrahim 14:7); a trial met with patience erases sins and raises rank, and its reward is given without measure (Surah Az-Zumar 39:10). A believer never loses, whatever his state. This eBook is divided into three subtopics: **(1)** understanding the nature of life's tests, **(2)** understanding the concept of gratitude in Islam, and **(3)** practising gratitude in daily life.

SURAH AZ-ZUMAR 39:10

قُلْ يَٰعِبَادِ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱتَّقُواْ رَبَّكُمْ ۚ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُواْ فِى هَٰذِهِ ٱلدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ ۗ
وَأَرْضُ ٱللَّهِ وَٰسِعَةٌ ۗ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى ٱلصَّٰبِرُونَ أَجْرَهُم بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿١٠﴾

Say, "O My servants who have believed, fear your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and the earth of Allah is spacious. Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/39:10

Imam al-Awza'i, as quoted by Ibn Kathir, explained the meaning of "without measure": the reward of the patient is not weighed or measured, but scooped out for them in abundance. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 39:10

Note: Scientific findings in this eBook are presented as evidence of harmony, not to "prove" the truth of the Qur'an. The truth of revelation stands on its own; science is provisional and always under revision.

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1. THE NATURE OF LIFE'S TESTS: BLESSINGS AND TRIALS

The Qur'an does not portray human beings as perfect creatures. Rather, it speaks frankly about the weakness of human nature when facing two situations — when given and when tested:

SURAH AL-ISRA' 17:83

وَإِذَآ أَنۡعَمۡنَا عَلَى ٱلۡإِنسَٰنِ أَعۡرَضَ وَنَـَٔا بِجَانِبِهِۦ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ ٱلشَّرُّ كَانَ يَـُٔوسٗا ٨٣

And when We bestow favor upon the disbeliever, he turns away and distances himself; and when evil touches him, he is ever despairing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/17:83

EXPLANATION OF THE VERSE

Imam Ibn Kathir explains that Allah describes the deficiency of human nature — except for those Allah protects. When a person is given ease such as wealth, health, victory and provision, he turns away from obedience and worship of Allah and distances himself. **Mujahid** explained *na'a bi janibihi* as "he distanced himself from Us". And when evil touches him — misfortune, accident and disaster — he becomes *ya'usa*, despairing of good ever returning. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 17:83

Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sa'di adds that this is the original nature of man, except for those whom Allah guides. The guided person, when receiving a blessing, humbles himself and gives thanks; and when struck by a trial, he is patient and hopes for reward. Tafsir al-Sa'di 17:83

Notice the two diseases mentioned in this verse: **arrogance in ease** and **despair in hardship**. Both stem from the same root — seeing blessings and trials without seeing Allah who gives and takes. The arrogant forget that the blessing is a loan; the despairing forget that Allah is able to replace it. The cure for both diseases was summed up by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in a short but dense hadith:

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2999

حَدَّثَنَا هَدَّابُ بْنُ خَالِدٍ الأَزْدِيُّ، وَشَيْبَانُ بْنُ فَرُّوخَ، جَمِيعًا عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ الْمُغِيرَةِ، - وَاللَّفْظُ لِشَيْبَانَ - حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ، حَدَّثَنَا ثَابِتٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ أَبِي لَيْلَى، عَنْ صُهَيْبٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " عَجَبًا لأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَلَيْسَ ذَاكَ لأَحَدٍ إِلاَّ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَّاءُ شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَّاءُ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ " .

TRANSLATION:

Suhayb رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "How wonderful is the affair of the believer! All of his affairs are good, and this is not the case for anyone except the believer. If something good happens to him, he is grateful, and that is good for him. And if something harmful befalls him, he is patient, and that (too) is good for him."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Haddab ibn Khalid al-Azdi and Shayban ibn Farrukh (this wording is Shayban's), from Sulayman ibn al-Mughirah, from Thabit al-Bunani, from 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Layla, from Suhayb ibn Sinan al-Rumi رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Asceticism and Softening of Hearts (Kitab al-Zuhd wa al-Raqa'iq), chapter: the affairs of the believer are all good, Hadith No. 2999.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2999

COMMENTARY OF THE SCHOLARS

Imam al-Nawawi placed this hadith in *Riyad al-Salihin* under the **Chapter on Patience**, showing that patience and gratitude are two sides of the same coin. **Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-'Uthaymin** explains in his commentary that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was "amazed" because the state of a believer is always good: if he is grateful for a blessing, he gains the reward of gratitude; if he is patient in a trial, he gains the reward of patience. This privilege is *exclusive* to believers, because one without faith becomes angry when struck by a trial and heedless when given a blessing — so both of his states become evil for him.

This hadith changes the way we read the events of life. The question "Why did this happen to me?" is replaced by "What does Allah want me to do in this situation — be grateful or be patient?" Further, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained that trials are not a sign of disgrace; rather, the higher a person's faith, the heavier his trials:

HADITH — JAMI' AL-TIRMIDHI, NO. 2398

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ، عَنْ عَاصِمِ بْنِ بَهْدَلَةَ، عَنْ مُصْعَبِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَىُّ النَّاسِ أَشَدُّ بَلاَءً قَالَ " الأَنْبِيَاءُ ثُمَّ الأَمْثَلُ فَالأَمْثَلُ فَيُبْتَلَى الرَّجُلُ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَإِنْ كَانَ دِينُهُ صُلْبًا اشْتَدَّ بَلاَؤُهُ وَإِنْ كَانَ فِي دِينِهِ رِقَّةٌ ابْتُلِيَ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَمَا يَبْرَحُ الْبَلاَءُ بِالْعَبْدِ حَتَّى يَتْرُكَهُ يَمْشِي عَلَى الأَرْضِ مَا عَلَيْهِ خَطِيئَةٌ " . قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ . وَفِي الْبَابِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ وَأُخْتِ حُذَيْفَةَ بْنِ

الْإِيمَانِ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سُئِلَ أَيُّ النَّاسِ أَشَدُّ بَلَاءً قَالَ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ ثُمَّ الْأَمْثَلُ فَالْأَمْثَلُ

TRANSLATION:

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas رضى الله عنه said: I asked: "O Messenger of Allah, which people are most severely tested?" He said: "The prophets, then those closest to them (in goodness), then those next to them. A man is tested according to his religion. If his religion is firm, his trial is severe; and if his religion is weak, he is tested according to his religion. Trials will continue to befall a servant until they leave him walking on the earth without any sin."

Abu 'Isa (al-Tirmidhi) said: This hadith is hasan sahih. In the same chapter there are narrations from Abu Hurayrah and from the sister of Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman that the Prophet ﷺ was asked: "Which people are most severely tested?" He said: "The prophets, then those closest to them, then those next to them."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Tirmidhi: from Qutaybah ibn Sa'id, from Hammad ibn Zayd, from 'Asim ibn Bahdalah, from Mus'ab ibn Sa'd, from his father Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Tirmidhi in Jami' al-Tirmidhi, chapters on asceticism (Abwab al-Zuhd), chapter on patience in trials, Hadith No. 2398. Also narrated by Ibn Majah (No. 4023) and Ahmad.

GRADE: HASAN SAHIH — according to Imam al-Tirmidhi himself; also graded hasan sahih by Shaykh Ahmad Shakir and Shaykh al-Albani (as shown on sunnah.com).

Source: https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:2398

Imam al-Mubarakfuri in *Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi* explains that *al-amthal fal-amthal* means the most excellent and then the next — whoever is closer to the prophets in faith and deeds is tested more heavily. This is because trials are a means of purifying them and raising their rank. Look at Prophet Ayyub عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, tested with illness and loss; Prophet Yusuf عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, tested with the well and the prison; and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself, who lost his children, his beloved wife and his uncle.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5645

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ أَبِي صَعْصَعَةَ، أَنَّهُ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ سَعِيدَ بْنَ يَسَارٍ أَبَا الْحُبَابِ، يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ، يَقُولُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُصِبْ مِنْهُ ".

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whomever Allah wills good for, He afflicts him with trials."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Yusuf al-Tinnisi, from Imam Malik ibn Anas, from Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Sa'sa'ah, from Sa'id ibn Yasar Abu al-Hubab, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Sick (Kitab al-Marda), chapter on the expiation of sins through illness, Hadith No. 5645.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5645

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani in *Fath al-Bari* mentions that the word *yusib minhu* can be read in two ways: *yusib* (Allah afflicts him) and *yusab* (he is afflicted). Both carry the same meaning: Allah tests him with trials in order to reward him. This hadith is a remedy for the heart that asks "Does Allah hate me?" — no, perhaps it is precisely because Allah wills good for you.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 5641–5642

حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْمَلِكِ بْنُ عَمْرٍو، حَدَّثَنَا زُهَيْرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَمْرِو بْنِ حَلْحَلَةَ، عَنْ عَطَاءِ بْنِ يَسَارٍ، عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ، وَعَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " مَا يُصِيبُ الْمُسْلِمَ مِنْ نَصَبٍ وَلاَ وَصَبٍ وَلاَ هَمٍّ وَلاَ حُزْنٍ وَلاَ أَذًى وَلاَ غَمٍّ حَتَّى الشَّوْكَةِ يُشَاكُهَا، إِلاَّ كَفَّرَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ خَطَايَاهُ ".

TRANSLATION:

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri رضى الله عنه and Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: "No fatigue, chronic illness, worry, sorrow, harm or grief befalls a Muslim — even a thorn that pricks him — except that Allah expiates some of his sins through it."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Musnadi, from 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Amr (Abu 'Amir al-'Aqadi), from Zuhayr ibn Muhammad, from Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn Halhalah, from 'Ata' ibn Yasar, from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri رضى الله عنه and Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Sick (Kitab al-Marda), chapter on the expiation of sins through illness, Hadith No. 5641–5642. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2573).

GRADE: SAHIH — muttafaq 'alayh (agreed upon by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5641

Imam al-Nawawi explains that this hadith brings great glad tidings to believers, because hardly anyone escapes these things. Even something as small as a thorn becomes kaffarah (an expiation of sins). **Ibn**

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Hajar quotes the discussion of scholars: the expiation of sins happens through the trial itself, while additional reward and the raising of rank are gained through patience and contentment with it.

HADITH — JAMI‘ AL-TIRMIDHI, NO. 2396

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ يَزِيدَ بْنِ أَبِي حَبِيبٍ، عَنْ سَعْدِ بْنِ سِنَانٍ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " إِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِعَبْدِهِ الْخَيْرَ عَجَّلَ لَهُ الْعُقُوبَةَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِعَبْدِهِ الشَّرَّ أَمْسَكَ عَنْهُ بِذَنْبِهِ حَتَّى يُوَفَّى بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ " . وَبِهَذَا الإِسْنَادِ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " إِنَّ عِظَمَ الْجَزَاءِ مَعَ عِظَمِ الْبَلاَءِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ إِذَا أَحَبَّ قَوْمًا ابْتَلاَهُمْ فَمَنْ رَضِيَ فَلَهُ الرِّضَا وَمَنْ سَخِطَ فَلَهُ السَّخَطُ " . قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ غَرِيبٌ مِنْ هَذَا الْوَجْهِ .

TRANSLATION:

Anas رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “When Allah wills good for His servant, He hastens his punishment in this world. And when Allah wills evil for His servant, He withholds (the punishment) from him for his sin until he is paid in full on the Day of Resurrection.”

And with the same chain, the Prophet ﷺ said: “The greatness of the reward is in accordance with the greatness of the trial. And when Allah loves a people, He tests them. So whoever is content, for him is (Allah’s) pleasure; and whoever is displeased, for him is (Allah’s) displeasure.”

Abu ‘Isa (al-Tirmidhi) said: This hadith is hasan gharib through this chain.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Tirmidhi: from Qutaybah ibn Sa‘id, from al-Layth ibn Sa‘d, from Yazid ibn Abi Habib, from Sa‘d ibn Sinan, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Tirmidhi in Jami‘ al-Tirmidhi, chapters on asceticism (Abwab al-Zuhd), chapter on patience in trials, Hadith No. 2396. The second part is also narrated by Ibn Majah (No. 4031).

GRADE: HASAN — al-Tirmidhi graded it hasan gharib; Shaykh Ahmad Shakir and Shaykh al-Albani graded it hasan sahih (as shown on sunnah.com) because it is supported by other chains. Some researchers weakened the narrator Sa‘d ibn Sinan, but its meaning is supported by authentic hadiths in this chapter.

Source: https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:2396

This hadith places the key in our own hands: **“Whoever is content, for him is pleasure; whoever is displeased, for him is displeasure.”** The same trial can be a ladder to Paradise for one person and a burden of sin for another. What makes the difference is the attitude of the heart. **Al-Mubarakfuri** explains that “hastening the punishment in this world” means Allah cleanses His servant of sins through the temporary trials of this world, so that he returns to Him clean.

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: TRIALS THAT BUILD RESILIENCE

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A national longitudinal study in the United States by **Seery, Holman and Silver (2010)** followed thousands of respondents over several years. The result was surprising: people who had been through *some* adversity in life showed **better** mental health — lower distress, fewer trauma symptoms and higher life satisfaction — than those who had experienced a great deal of adversity, *and also* than those who had **never** been tested at all. Those who had been tested were also the least affected when a new hardship struck. The researchers concluded that adversity, in a certain measure, builds *resilience*. This is in harmony with the sunnah of Allah that He does not burden a soul beyond its capacity (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:286), and that trials are a process of nurturing, not merely suffering.

STUDY REFERENCES:

Seery, M. D., Holman, E. A., & Silver, R. C. (2010). Whatever does not kill us: Cumulative lifetime adversity, vulnerability, and resilience. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 99(6), 1025–1041. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021344

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2. THE CONCEPT OF GRATITUDE IN ISLAM

Linguistically, *shukr* comes from a word meaning a visible effect — like an animal that is *shakur*, one that shows plumpness even when given little food. Technically, gratitude is **making the effect of Allah's blessing visible** in the heart (by acknowledging it), on the tongue (by praising) and in the limbs (by using it in obedience).

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim in *Madarij al-Salikin* states that gratitude is built upon five foundations: **(1)** the submission of the grateful one to the Giver of blessings, **(2)** his love for Him, **(3)** his acknowledgement of His blessings, **(4)** his praise of Him for them, and **(5)** not using the blessing in what He dislikes. Whoever fulfils these five foundations has truly given thanks.

ALLAH'S PROMISE: GRATITUDE INVITES INCREASE

SURAH IBRAHIM 14:7

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

﴿٧﴾

And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/14:7

Imam Ibn Kathir explains: "If you are grateful for My blessings upon you, I will surely increase them. And if you deny — that is, reject, conceal and deny the blessing — indeed My punishment is severe," that is, by taking the blessing away from them and punishing them for their ingratitude. The word *ta'adhdhana* means that Allah **proclaimed** and **announced** this promise firmly — a promise that will never be broken. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 14:7

Notice that the opposite of gratitude here is **kufr** (ingratitude). Denying a blessing is no small matter; it is a form of kufr — though not the kufr that takes one out of the religion — which invites the removal of the blessing.

BLESSINGS ARE ALSO A TEST

SURAH AN-NAML 27:40

قَالَ ٱلَّذِى عِندَهُۥ عِلۡمٌ مِّنَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ أَنَا۠ ءَاتِيكَ بِهِۦ قَبۡلَ أَن يَرۡتَدَّ إِلَيۡكَ طَرۡفُكَۚ فَلَمَّا رَءَاهُ مُسۡتَقِرًّا عِندَهُۥ قَالَ هَٰذَا مِن فَضۡلِ رَبِّى لِيَبۡلُوَنِىٓ ءَأَشۡكُرُ أَمۡ أَكۡفُرُۖ وَمَن شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشۡكُرُ لِنَفۡسِهِۦۖ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّى غَنِىٌّ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

Said one who had knowledge from the Scripture, "I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you." And when [Solomon] saw it placed before him, he said, "This is from the favor of my Lord to test me whether I will be grateful or ungrateful. And whoever is grateful - his gratitude is only for [the benefit of] himself. And whoever is ungrateful - then indeed, my Lord is Free of need and Generous."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/27:40

This verse records the moment when the throne of the Queen of Sheba was brought before Prophet Sulayman عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ in the blink of an eye. A king with an unrivalled kingdom, commanding the jinn and the wind — yet the first words from his tongue were not “Behold my greatness!”, but **“This is from the favour of my Lord to test me whether I will be grateful or ungrateful.” Imam Ibn Kathir** explains that the benefit of gratitude returns to the grateful one himself, while Allah is Free of need — not needing His servants’ thanks — and Most Generous. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 27:40

This is a great lesson that completes Surah Al-Isra’ 17:83: **a blessing is not a gift without questions; it is also an exam.** Some people pass the test of trials but fail the test of blessings. **‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf** رضى الله عنه once wept when served delicious food, remembering his companions who were martyred in poverty, fearing that his own good had been hastened in this world.

GRATITUDE IS THE FRUIT OF WISDOM

SURAH LUQMAN 31:12

وَلَقَدۡ ءَاتَيۡنَا لُقۡمَٰنَ ٱلۡحِكۡمَةَ أَنِ ٱشۡكُرۡ لِلَّهِۚ وَمَن يَشۡكُرۡ فَإِنَّمَا يَشۡكُرُ لِنَفۡسِهِۦۖ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَنِىٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿١٢﴾

And We had certainly given Luqman wisdom [and said], "Be grateful to Allah." And whoever is grateful is grateful for [the benefit of] himself. And whoever denies [His favor] - then indeed, Allah is Free of need and Praiseworthy.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/31:12

Allah introduces Luqman as a man granted **wisdom**, and the first thing mentioned after wisdom is **“Be grateful to Allah.” Shaykh al-Sa‘di** explains that wisdom is true knowledge, acting upon it and putting

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things in their proper place — and among the greatest fruits of wisdom is gratitude to Allah. The truly wise person is one who knows who gave him everything, and so thanks Him. Tafsir al-Sa'di 31:12

THE STORY OF SABA': WHEN BLESSINGS ARE DENIED

SURAH SABA' 34:15–17

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ ءَايَةٌ ۖ جَنَّتَانِ عَن يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ ۖ كُلُوا۟ مِن رِّزْقِ
رَبِّكُمْ وَٱشْكُرُوا۟ لَهُۥ ۚ بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ ﴿١٥﴾

There was for [the tribe of] Saba' in their dwelling place a sign: two [fields of] gardens on the right and on the left. [They were told], "Eat from the provisions of your Lord and be grateful to Him. A good land [have you], and a forgiving Lord."

فَأَعْرَضُوا۟ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ ٱلْعَرِمِ وَبَدَّلْنَٰهُم بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتَىْ أُكُلٍ
خَمْطٍ وَأَثْلٍ وَشَىْءٍ مِّن سِدْرٍ قَلِيلٍ ﴿١٦﴾

But they turned away [refusing], so We sent upon them the flood of the dam, and We replaced their two [fields of] gardens with gardens of bitter fruit, tamarisks and something of sparse lote trees.

ذَٰلِكَ جَزَيْنَٰهُم بِمَا كَفَرُوا۟ ۖ وَهَلْ نُجَٰزِىٓ إِلَّا ٱلْكَفُورَ ﴿١٧﴾

[By] that We repaid them because they disbelieved. And do We [thus] repay except the ungrateful?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:15-17

The people of Saba' in Yemen were given an extraordinary blessing: two rows of lush gardens on the left and right of the valley, the fruit of the **Ma'rib dam**, which stored rainwater and irrigated their land. Allah asked only two things: **"Eat from the provision of your Lord and be grateful to Him."** Their land was called *baldatun tayyibatun wa rabbun ghafur* — a good land and a Forgiving Lord.

But they turned away. **Imam Ibn Kathir** relates that Allah then sent *sayl al-'arim* — a great flood that burst the dam — so that the lush gardens turned into trees bearing bitter fruit (*khamt*), *athl* trees (tamarisk) and a few lote trees. Allah closes this story with a lasting rule: **"And do We thus repay except the ungrateful?"** This story is a living explanation of the threat *"indeed, My punishment is severe"* in Surah Ibrahim 14:7. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 34:15

THE BLESSING OF THE SENSES AND THE MIND

SURAH AN-NAHL 16:78

وَٱللَّهُ أَخۡرَجَكُم مِّنۢ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَٰتِكُمۡ لَا تَعۡلَمُونَ شَيۡـٔٗا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلسَّمۡعَ وَٱلۡأَبۡصَٰرَ وَٱلۡأَفۡـِٔدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَشۡكُرُونَ ٧٨

And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/16:78

Every human being is born **knowing nothing**. Then Allah grants hearing, sight and *af'idah* (hearts and minds) — and the purpose of this gift is stated clearly: ***la'allakum tashkurun* — so that you may be grateful. Imam Ibn Kathir** explains that with hearing a person recognises sounds, with sight he recognises what he sees, and with the mind he distinguishes between what benefits and what harms. All of these are granted gradually, little by little, as a person grows. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 16:78

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: HEARING COMES BEFORE SIGHT

In many verses, the Qur'an mentions **hearing before sight** (*al-sam' wa al-absar*). The study by **Hepper and Shahidullah (1994)** used ultrasound to record foetal responses to sounds played over the mother's abdomen. The foetus began responding to sound as early as **19 weeks** of pregnancy, and the range of frequencies it could hear kept expanding until week 35. In contrast, the foetus's eyelids only open around the third trimester, and a baby's vision is still blurred at birth, maturing gradually over the first months of life. This sequence — hearing first, then sight, then the maturing of the mind — matches the order in Surah An-Nahl 16:78, and shows how each sense is a blessing granted in stages, to be met with gratitude.

STUDY REFERENCES:

Hepper, P. G., & Shahidullah, B. S. (1994). Development of fetal hearing. Archives of Disease in Childhood – Fetal and Neonatal Edition, 71(2), F81–F87. https://doi.org/10.1136/fn.71.2.f81

THE GRATITUDE OF THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4836

حَدَّثَنَا صَدَقَةُ بْنُ الْفَضْلِ، أَخْبَرَنَا ابْنُ عُيَيْنَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا زِيَادٌ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ الْمُغِيرَةَ، يَقُولُ قَامَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم حَتَّى تَوَرَّمَتْ قَدَمَاهُ فَقِيلَ لَهُ غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَكَ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ قَالَ " أَفَلاَ أَكُونُ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا ".

TRANSLATION:

Al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah رضى الله عنه said: The Prophet ﷺ stood (in night prayer) until both his feet became swollen. It was said to him: "Allah has forgiven you your past and future sins." He said: "Should I not be a grateful servant?"

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Sadaqah ibn al-Fadl, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from Ziyad ibn 'Ilaqah, that he heard al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Tafsir, Surah al-Fath, Hadith No. 4836. Also in al-Bukhari No. 1130 and Muslim No. 2819.

GRADE: SAHIH — muttafaq 'alayh (agreed upon by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4836

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar in *Fath al-Bari* explains that this hadith shows **gratitude is not merely words of the tongue, but also deeds of the limbs**. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ understood that Allah's forgiveness is the greatest blessing, so it calls for the greatest gratitude — striving hard in worship. Scholars also state that the more blessings one receives, the greater the duty of gratitude. If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ — whose sins were forgiven — worshipped until his feet swelled as a sign of gratitude, what about us?

GRATITUDE TO ALLAH THROUGH GRATITUDE TO PEOPLE

HADITH — SUNAN ABI DAWUD, NO. 4811

حَدَّثَنَا مُسْلِمُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، حَدَّثَنَا الرَّبِيعُ بْنُ مُسْلِمٍ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " لاَ يَشْكُرُ اللَّهَ مَنْ لاَ يَشْكُرُ النَّاسَ " .

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: "He has not thanked Allah who has not thanked people."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Abu Dawud: from Muslim ibn Ibrahim, from al-Rabi' ibn Muslim, from Muhammad ibn Ziyad, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Abu Dawud in Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of Manners (Kitab al-Adab), chapter on thanking for a favour, Hadith No. 4811. Also narrated by al-Tirmidhi (No. 1954) with the wording "Whoever does not thank people does not thank Allah".

GRADE: SAHIH — graded by Shaykh al-Albani and Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut; al-Tirmidhi graded his narration hasan sahih (as shown on sunnah.com).

Source: https://sunnah.com/abudawud:4811

Imam al-Khattabi in *Ma'alim al-Sunan* mentions two meanings of this hadith: **first**, a person whose nature is not to thank people for their kindness usually does not thank Allah for His blessings either; **second**, Allah does not accept a servant's thanks to Him as long as he does not thank people for their kindness to

him, because the two are linked. Thanking parents, spouses, teachers, neighbours and anyone who does us good is part of gratitude to Allah.

GRATITUDE FOR SMALL BLESSINGS

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2734A

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، وَابْنُ، نُمَيْرٍ - وَاللَّفْظُ لاِبْنِ نُمَيْرٍ - قَالاَ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو أُسَامَةَ وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بِشْرٍ عَنْ زَكَرِيَّاءَ بْنِ أَبِي زَائِدَةَ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ أَبِي بُرْدَةَ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ، مَالِكٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَيَرْضَى عَنِ الْعَبْدِ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ الأَكْلَةَ فَيَحْمَدَهُ عَلَيْهَا أَوْ يَشْرَبَ الشَّرْبَةَ فَيَحْمَدَهُ عَلَيْهَا " .

TRANSLATION:

Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Allah is indeed pleased with a servant who eats a morsel of food and praises Him for it, or drinks a sip of drink and praises Him for it.”

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah and Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Numayr (this wording is Ibn Numayr’s), from Abu Usamah Hammad ibn Usamah and Muhammad ibn Bishr, from Zakariyya ibn Abi Za’idah, from Sa‘id ibn Abi Burdah, from Anas ibn Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Remembrance, Supplication, Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness, chapter on the recommendation of praising Allah after eating and drinking, Hadith No. 2734a.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2734a

Imam al-Nawawi explains that *al-aklah* means a single meal (such as lunch or dinner), and this hadith shows the recommendation of praising Allah after eating and drinking. How easily Allah’s pleasure is earned: a morsel of food and a sip of water, when accompanied by *Alhamdulillah*, become a cause of Allah’s pleasure. Gratitude does not wait for great blessings; it begins with the blessings we consider small and ordinary.

THE PROSTRATION OF GRATITUDE

HADITH — SUNAN ABI DAWUD, NO. 2774

حَدَّثَنَا مَخْلَدُ بْنُ خَالِدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَاصِمٍ، عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ، بَكَّارِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْعَزِيزِ أَخْبَرَنِي أَبِي عَبْدُ الْعَزِيزِ، عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَنَّهُ كَانَ إِذَا جَاءَهُ أَمْرُ سُرُورٍ أَوْ بُشِّرَ بِهِ خَرَّ سَاجِدًا شَاكِرًا لِلَّهِ .

TRANSLATION:

Abu Bakrah رضى الله عنه narrated that whenever something pleasing came to the Prophet ﷺ, or he was given good news of it, he would fall down in prostration in gratitude to Allah.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Abu Dawud: from Makhlad ibn Khalid, from Abu ‘Asim al-Nabil, from Abu Bakrah Bakkar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, from his father ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Abi Bakrah, from Abu Bakrah Nufay‘ ibn al-Harith رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Abu Dawud in Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of Jihad, chapter on the prostration of gratitude, Hadith No. 2774. Also narrated by al-Tirmidhi (No. 1578) and Ibn Majah (No. 1394).

GRADE: SAHIH — graded by Shaykh al-Albani; Shaykh Shu‘ayb al-Arna’ut graded it sahih li ghayrihi (authentic with the support of other narrations) (as shown on sunnah.com).

Source: https://sunnah.com/abudawud:2774

Imam al-Tirmidhi, after narrating the same hadith (No. 1578), states that **most of the people of knowledge act upon this hadith** and hold that the prostration of gratitude is prescribed. In the Shafi‘i school, as explained by **Imam al-Nawawi** in *al-Majmu‘*, the prostration of gratitude is recommended upon receiving a new blessing or being saved from an evident calamity — and it is done outside the prayer.

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: “COUNTING BLESSINGS” AND WELL-BEING

In a series of randomised controlled experiments, **Emmons and McCullough (2003)** divided participants into several groups. One group was asked to write down things they were grateful for each week or each day; other groups wrote down hassles or neutral events. The group that “counted blessings” showed higher well-being on several measures — especially positive emotion — and in one of the studies they also reported better sleep. The study also included patients with neuromuscular disease, and the effect still appeared. Science cannot measure Allah’s promise in Surah Ibrahim 14:7, but it shows one form of “increase” that can be felt in this world: a grateful heart is a more spacious heart.

STUDY REFERENCES:

Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84(2), 377–389. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377

3. PRACTISING GRATITUDE IN DAILY LIFE

Having understood that blessings and trials are tests, and that gratitude is worship of the heart, tongue and limbs, the next question is: **how do we bring gratitude to life from morning to night?** The Qur'an and Sunnah give very practical guidance.

REMEMBERING ALLAH: THE FOUNDATION OF GRATITUDE

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:152

فَٱذْكُرُونِيٓ أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَٱشْكُرُواْ لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿١٥٢﴾

So remember Me; I will remember you. And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:152

Allah pairs **remembrance** with **gratitude** in one verse. **Imam Ibn Kathir** quotes **al-Hasan al-Basri**: "Remember Me in what I have made obligatory upon you, and I will remember you in what I have made obligatory upon Myself for you." Remembrance awakens the heart to the Giver of blessings; gratitude expresses that awareness in deeds. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:152

HADITH — SUNAN ABI DAWUD, NO. 1522

حَدَّثَنَا عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عُمَرَ بْنِ مَيْسَرَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يَزِيدَ الْمُقْرِئُ، حَدَّثَنَا حَيْوَةُ بْنُ شُرَيْحٍ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ عُقْبَةَ بْنَ مُسْلِمٍ، يَقُولُ حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ الْحُبُلِيُّ، عَنِ الصُّنَابِحِيِّ، عَنْ مُعَاذِ بْنِ جَبَلٍ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم أَخَذَ بِيَدِهِ وَقَالَ " يَا مُعَاذُ وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لأُحِبُّكَ وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لأُحِبُّكَ " . فَقَالَ " أُوصِيكَ يَا مُعَاذُ لاَ تَدَعَنَّ فِي دُبُرِ كُلِّ صَلاَةٍ تَقُولُ اللَّهُمَّ أَعِنِّي عَلَى ذِكْرِكَ وَشُكْرِكَ وَحُسْنِ عِبَادَتِكَ " . وَأَوْصَى بِذَلِكَ مُعَاذٌ الصُّنَابِحِيَّ وَأَوْصَى بِهِ الصُّنَابِحِيُّ أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ .

TRANSLATION:

Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ took his hand and said: "O Mu'adh, by Allah, I love you. By Allah, I love you." Then he said: "I advise you, O Mu'adh, never to leave saying at the end of every prayer: Allahumma a'inni 'ala dhikrika wa shukrika wa husni 'ibadatik — O Allah, help me to remember You, to thank You and to worship You well." Mu'adh passed this advice on to al-Sunabihi, and al-Sunabihi passed it on to Abu 'Abd al-Rahman.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Abu Dawud: from 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar ibn Maysarah, from 'Abdullah ibn Yazid al-Muqri', from Haywah ibn Shurayh, from 'Uqbah ibn Muslim, from Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hubuli, from al-Sunabihi, from Mu'adh ibn Jabal رضى الله عنه.

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REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Abu Dawud in Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of Witr, chapter on seeking forgiveness, Hadith No. 1522. Also narrated by al-Nasa'i and Ahmad.

GRADE: SAHIH — graded by Shaykh al-Albani and Shaykh Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut (as shown on sunnah.com).

Source: https://sunnah.com/abudawud:1522

Notice that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not merely tell Mu'adh to be grateful, but taught him **to ask Allah's help in being grateful**. This is because gratitude itself is a blessing that requires divine enabling. **Imam Ibn al-Qayyim** in *Madarij al-Salikin* quotes his teacher, **Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah**: "I reflected on the most beneficial supplication, and I found it to be asking for help in attaining His pleasure; then I saw it in Surah Al-Fatihah: *Iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in*." This supplication is short, yet it gathers remembrance, gratitude and worship — practise it after every obligatory prayer.

BEGINNING THE DAY WITH GRATITUDE

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6312

حَدَّثَنَا قَبِيصَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ، عَنْ رِبْعِيِّ بْنِ حِرَاشٍ، عَنْ حُذَيْفَةَ، قَالَ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم إِذَا أَوَى إِلَى فِرَاشِهِ قَالَ " بِاسْمِكَ أَمُوتُ وَأَحْيَا ". وَإِذَا قَامَ قَالَ " الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَانَا بَعْدَ مَا أَمَاتَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ ". تُنْشِرُهَا: تُخْرِجُهَا

TRANSLATION:

Hudhayfah رضى الله عنه said: When the Prophet ﷺ wanted to lie down on his bed, he would say: "Bismika amutu wa ahya — In Your name I die and I live." And when he woke up, he would say: "Alhamdu lillahil-ladhi ahyana ba'da ma amatana wa ilayhin-nushur — All praise is due to Allah who gave us life after He caused us to die, and to Him is the return."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Qabisah ibn 'Uqbah, from Sufyan al-Thawri, from 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Umayr, from Rib'i ibn Hirash, from Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Supplications (Kitab al-Da'awat), chapter on what to say when going to sleep, Hadith No. 6312.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6312

Ibn Hajar explains that sleep is called "death" because it resembles death — the cutting off of awareness and movement — and so it is called *al-mawt al-asghar* (the lesser death). So every morning we are in fact "brought back to life". The first moment of a believer's day begins with **Alhamdulillah**, and the last moment of his night closes with entrusting his soul to Allah. This is the frame of gratitude that encloses the whole day.

COUNTING THE COUNTLESS BLESSINGS

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SURAH AN-NAHL 16:18

وَإِن تَعُدُّواْ نِعۡمَةَ ٱللَّهِ لَا تُحۡصُوهَآۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَغَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٞ ١٨

And if you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/16:18

Imam Ibn Kathir explains that Allah informs His servants of their inability to count His blessings, let alone give thanks for all of them. Then Allah closes the verse with *Ghafur Rahim* — He pardons our shortcomings in gratitude. If Allah demanded thanks for every blessing, we would be unable. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 16:18

HADITH — JAMI' AL-TIRMIDHI, NO. 2346

حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو بْنُ مَالِكٍ وَمَحْمُودُ بْنُ خِدَاشٍ الْبَغْدَادِيُّ قَالَا حَدَّثَنَا مَرْوَانُ بْنُ مُعَاوِيَةَ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ أَبِي شُمَيْلَةَ الْأَنْصَارِيُّ عَنْ سَلَمَةَ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ مِحْصَنٍ الْخَطْمِيِّ عَنْ أَبِيهِ وَكَانَتْ لَهُ صُحْبَةٌ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ أَصْبَحَ مِنْكُمْ آمِنًا فِي سِرْبِهِ مُعَافًى فِي جَسَدِهِ عِنْدَهُ قُوتُ يَوْمِهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا حِيزَتْ لَهُ الدُّنْيَا قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ غَرِيبٌ لَا نَعْرِفُهُ إِلَّا مِنْ حَدِيثِ مَرْوَانَ بْنِ مُعَاوِيَةَ وَحِيزَتْ جُمِعَتْ حَدَّثَنَا بِذَلِكَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْمَعِيلَ حَدَّثَنَا الْحُمَيْدِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا مَرْوَانُ بْنُ مُعَاوِيَةَ نَحْوَهُ وَفِي الْبَاب عَنْ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ

TRANSLATION:

'Ubaydullah ibn Mihsan al-Khatmi رضى الله عنه — a Companion of the Prophet — said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever among you wakes up secure in his dwelling, healthy in his body, and having his food for the day, it is as if the whole world has been gathered for him."

Abu 'Isa (al-Tirmidhi) said: This hadith is hasan gharib; we know it only from the narration of Marwan ibn Mu'awiyah. Hizat means "gathered". Muhammad ibn Isma'il (al-Bukhari) narrated it to us from al-Humaydi, from Marwan ibn Mu'awiyah, similarly. In the same chapter there is a narration from Abu al-Darda'.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Tirmidhi: from 'Amr ibn Malik and Mahmud ibn Khidash al-Baghdadi, from Marwan ibn Mu'awiyah, from 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Shumaylah al-Ansari, from Salamah ibn 'Ubaydullah ibn Mihsan al-Khatmi, from his father 'Ubaydullah ibn Mihsan رضى الله عنه. Second chain: Imam al-Bukhari, from al-Humaydi, from Marwan ibn Mu'awiyah.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Tirmidhi in Jami' al-Tirmidhi, chapters on asceticism (Abwab al-Zuhd), Hadith No. 2346. Also narrated by Ibn Majah (No. 4141) and al-Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad.

GRADE: HASAN — al-Tirmidhi graded it hasan gharib; Shaykh Ahmad Shakir and Shaykh al-Albani graded it hasan (as shown on sunnah.com).

Source: https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:2346

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This hadith teaches us to "count blessings" in the most basic way: **safety, health and food for today**. **Al-Mubarakfuri** explains that *aminan fi sirbihi* means safe in himself, his family and his dwelling. Whoever has these three things truly possesses the world. How many people have great wealth but are not safe, not healthy, or have no appetite to eat.

LOOKING AT THOSE BELOW IN WORLDLY MATTERS

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2963C

وَحَدَّثَنِي زُهَيْرُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ، حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، ح وَحَدَّثَنَا أَبُو كُرَيْبٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، ح وَحَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، - وَاللَّفْظُ لَهُ - حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، وَوَكِيعٌ، عَنِ الأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم " انْظُرُوا إِلَى مَنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَلاَ تَنْظُرُوا إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ فَوْقَكُمْ فَهُوَ أَجْدَرُ أَنْ لاَ تَزْدَرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ " . قَالَ أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ " عَلَيْكُمْ " .

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Look at those below you, and do not look at those above you. That is more fitting so that you do not belittle the blessings of Allah (upon you)." Abu Mu'awiyah said: "…(the blessings of Allah) upon you."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim through three chains: from Zuhayr ibn Harb, from Jarir ibn 'Abd al-Hamid; and from Abu Kurayb, from Abu Mu'awiyah; and from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah (this wording is his), from Abu Mu'awiyah and Waki' ibn al-Jarrah — all of them from al-A'mash, from Abu Salih al-Samman, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Asceticism and Softening of Hearts (Kitab al-Zuhd wa al-Raqa'iq), Hadith No. 2963c. The first part is also narrated by al-Bukhari (No. 6490).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2963c

Imam al-Nawawi quotes **Imam Ibn Jarir al-Tabari**: "This hadith gathers many kinds of good." When a person looks at someone better off than him in worldly matters, his soul tends to demand more and belittle the blessings he has. But when he looks at someone worse off, he realises Allah's blessings upon him and so gives thanks and humbles himself. However, in matters of **religion**, the scholars explain that we should look at those **higher** than us so that we are motivated to improve ourselves.

SPEAKING OF ALLAH'S BLESSINGS

SURAH AD-DUHA 93:11

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ ﴿١١﴾

But as for the favor of your Lord, report [it].

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/93:11

Imam Ibn Kathir explains the meaning of this verse: just as you were once poor and Allah made you self-sufficient, so mention Allah's blessing upon you. **Mujahid** explained the blessing here as prophethood and the Qur'an revealed to him. Speaking of blessings (*tahadduth bi al-ni'mah*) is not for boasting, but to acknowledge that everything comes from Allah — and this is part of gratitude with the tongue. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 93:11

GRATITUDE IN TRIALS: PATIENCE AND ISTIRJA'

Gratitude does not stop when a trial comes. A believer remains grateful when tested — grateful that the trial did not strike his religion, that it was not greater than what happened, and that a reward awaits him. Allah teaches the words that anchor the heart when struck by a trial:

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:155–157

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ ٱلْخَوْفِ وَٱلْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ ٱلْأَمْوَٰلِ وَٱلْأَنفُسِ وَٱلثَّمَرَٰتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient.

ٱلَّذِينَ إِذَآ أَصَٰبَتْهُم مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالُوٓا۟ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رَٰجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."

أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَٰتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۖ وَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:155-157

Sayyidina 'Umar ibn al-Khattab رضى الله عنه said about verses 156–157: "**What excellent two loads, and what an excellent addition!**" — meaning *salawat* (forgiveness and praise) and *rahmah* from Allah as the two loads, and *al-muhtadun* (guidance) as the addition. These words are narrated by Imam al-Bukhari as *mu'allaq* in the Book of Funerals, chapter on patience at the first shock. sunnah.com/bukhari:1302

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HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 918B

وَحَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو أُسَامَةَ، عَنْ سَعْدِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي عُمَرُ بْنُ كَثِيرِ بْنِ أَفْلَحَ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ ابْنَ سَفِينَةَ، يُحَدِّثُ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ أُمَّ سَلَمَةَ، زَوْجَ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم تَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ " مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ تُصِيبُهُ مُصِيبَةٌ فَيَقُولُ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ اللَّهُمَّ أْجُرْنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي وَأَخْلِفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا إِلاَّ أَجَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي مُصِيبَتِهِ وَأَخْلَفَ لَهُ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا " . قَالَتْ فَلَمَّا تُوُفِّيَ أَبُو سَلَمَةَ قُلْتُ كَمَا أَمَرَنِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَأَخْلَفَ اللَّهُ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم .

TRANSLATION:

Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ, said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: "There is no servant who is struck by a calamity and says: Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un, Allahumma'jurni fi musibati wa akhlif li khayran minha — Indeed we belong to Allah and to Him we return. O Allah, reward me in my calamity and replace it for me with something better — except that Allah rewards him in his calamity and replaces it for him with something better."

Umm Salamah said: "When Abu Salamah died, I said (that supplication) as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had commanded me. So Allah replaced him for me with someone better than him: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, from Abu Usamah Hammad ibn Usamah, from Sa'd ibn Sa'id al-Ansari, from 'Umar ibn Kathir ibn Aflah, from Ibn Safinah, from Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Funerals (Kitab al-Jana'iz), chapter on what to say when struck by a calamity, Hadith No. 918b.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:918b

Imam al-Nawawi explains that this hadith shows the recommendation of saying *istirja'* and this supplication when struck by a calamity. The story of Umm Salamah رضى الله عنها is deeply moving: when her husband Abu Salamah died, she said to herself, "Who is better than Abu Salamah?" Yet she still said the supplication in obedience to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ — and Allah replaced him with the best of people, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself. Sometimes we cannot imagine a "better replacement", but Allah knows best.

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: GRATITUDE CHANGES THE BRAIN

A brain-imaging (fMRI) study by **Fox, Kaplan, Damasio and Damasio (2015)** found that feelings of gratitude are linked to activity in the **anterior cingulate cortex** and the **medial prefrontal cortex** — brain regions involved in moral judgement, valuation and understanding others. The study by **Kini and colleagues (2016)** involved people receiving counselling. One group was asked to write letters of gratitude to others for several weeks. **Three months later**, their brains still showed greater sensitivity to gratitude in the medial prefrontal cortex than the control group. A review by **Wood, Froh and Geraghty (2010)** concluded that gratitude is strongly linked to well-being and can be cultivated through simple practices. These findings reflect what the Sunnah has taught for 14 centuries: gratitude is **a practice to be trained every day** — after eating, after waking, after prayer — until it becomes a habit of the heart, like the supplication taught to Mu'adh رضى الله عنه.

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DAILY PRACTICES OF GRATITUDE: A SUMMARY

- **On waking:** Begin the day with *Alhamdu lillahil-ladhi ahyana ba'da ma amatana wa ilayhin-nushur* (Bukhari 6312).
- **After every obligatory prayer:** Say *Allahumma a'inni 'ala dhikrika wa shukrika wa husni 'ibadatik* (Abu Dawud 1522).
- **After eating and drinking:** Say *Alhamdulillah* — a cause of Allah's pleasure (Muslim 2734).
- **Every morning:** Count three basic blessings — safety, health and today's food (Tirmidhi 2346).
- **In worldly matters:** Look at those worse off, not those better off (Muslim 2963).
- **Towards people:** Say thank you and repay their kindness (Abu Dawud 4811).
- **On receiving good news:** Prostrate in gratitude (Abu Dawud 2774).
- **When struck by a calamity:** Say *Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un, Allahumma'jurni fi musibati wa akhlif li khayran minha* (Muslim 918).
- **With the limbs:** Use every blessing — eyes, ears, wealth, time — in obedience (Surah An-Nahl 16:78; Bukhari 4836).

A BRIEF COMPARISON

THE HEEDLESS PERSON	THE GRATEFUL AND PATIENT BELIEVER
Given a blessing: turns away and distances himself (17:83)	Given a blessing: gives thanks — it is good for him (Muslim 2999)
Struck by a trial: despairs (17:83)	Struck by a trial: is patient and says istirja‘ (2:156; Muslim 918)
Thinks the blessing is the fruit of his own effort	“This is from the favour of my Lord to test me” (27:40)
Looks at those above, and belittles blessings	Looks at those below, and values blessings (Muslim 2963)
Blessing removed — the story of Saba’ (34:16–17)	Blessing increased (14:7)
Displeased with the test — for him is displeasure (Tirmidhi 2396)	Content — for him is pleasure; sins erased (Bukhari 5641)
Forgets to thank people	Thanks people as part of gratitude to Allah (Abu Dawud 4811)

CLOSING: THE TWO WINGS OF A BELIEVER

A bird cannot fly with one wing. So it is with the believer: he flies towards Allah with two wings — **gratitude** when given and **patience** when tested. Blessings and trials come in turn, but the right attitude of the heart turns both into **reward**. That is the secret that amazed the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: “All of his affairs are good.”

May Allah make us among His servants who are grateful when given, patient when tested, and seek forgiveness when they sin — for these three, the scholars say, are the signs of a servant’s happiness. **Allahumma a‘inna ‘ala dhikrika wa shukrika wa husni ‘ibadatik.**

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya ibn Ayyub, Qutaybah ibn Sa'id and 'Ali ibn Hujr, from Isma'il ibn Ja'far, from al-'Ala' ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya ibn Ayyub, Qutaybah ibn Sa'id and 'Ali ibn Hujr, from Isma'il ibn Ja'far, from al-'Ala' ibn 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه.

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GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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