**THE FOURTH WORD**

**The Prescribed Prayers’ Value**

*In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.*

 The prescribed prayers (salat) are Islam’s pillars. To fully understand their importance, consider this parable: A ruler gives each of his two servants 24 gold coins and sends them to a beautiful farm that is 2 months’ travel away. He tells them: “Use this money to buy your ticket, your supplies, and what you will need after you arrive. After traveling for a day, you will reach a transit station. Chose a method of transportation that you can afford.”

The servants leave. One spends only a little money before reaching the station, and so wisely that his master increases it a thousand fold. The other servant gambles away 23 of the 24 coins before reaching the station. The first servant advises the second one: “Use this coin to buy your ticket, or else you’ll have to walk and suffer hunger. Our master is generous. Maybe he’ll forgive you. Maybe you can take a plane, so we can reach the farm in a day. If not, you’ll have to go on foot and endure 2 months of hunger while crossing the desert.” If he ignores his friend’s advice, anyone can see what will happen.

Now listen to the explanation, those of you who do not pray, as well as you, my soul that is not inclined toward prayer. The ruler is our Creator. One servant represents religious people who pray with fervor; the other represents people who do not like to pray. The 24 coins are the 24 hours of a day. The farm is heaven, the transit station is the grave, and the journey is from the grave to eternal life. People cover that journey at different times according to their deeds and conduct. Some of the truly devout pass in a day 1,000 years like lightning, while others pass 50,000 years with the speed of imagination. The Qur’an alludes to this truth in 22:47 and 70:4.13

The ticket is the prescribed prayers, which can be prayed in an hour. If you spend 23 hours in worldly affairs and do not reserve the remaining hour for the prescribed prayers, you are a foolish loser. You may be tempted to use half of your money for a lottery being played by 1,000 people. Your chance of winning is 1:1,000, while those who pray have a 99 percent chance of winning. If you do not use at least one coin to gain an inexhaustible treasure, something is wrong with you.

Prayer comforts the soul and the mind and is easy for the body. Furthermore, correct intention transforms our deeds and conduct into worship. Thus our short lifetime is spent for the sake of eternal life in the other world, and our transient life gains a kind of permanence.

**Said Nursi**