

Selections from An-Nawawī's Forty Ḥadīth¹

1 On the authority of the Commander of the Faithful² Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb [the second caliph] (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say:

Works [will be rewarded] only in accordance with intentions, so each man will receive only according to what he intended. Thus he whose migration [from Mecca to Medina] was for Allah and His Messenger [will be rewarded for] a migration for Allah and His Messenger, but he whose migration was for the sake of some worldly benefit or to take some woman in marriage, his migration [will be rewarded] according to that for the sake of which he migrated.

This is related by the two transmitters of Prophetic traditions, Abū ‘Abdullah Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mughīra ibn Bardizbah al-Bukhārī and Abū ‘I-Ḥusain Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj ibn Muslim al-Qushairī an-Naisābūrī, in their [two books both called] *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which are the soundest of the compilations [of *aḥādīth*].³

2 Also on the authority of ‘Umar⁴ (may Allah be pleased with him), who said:

One day while we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black; no signs of journeying were to be seen on him and none of us knew him. He walked up and sat down by the Prophet (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Resting his knees against his and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said, “O Muḥammad, tell me about Islam.” The Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, “Islam is that you should testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah, that you should perform the prayers, pay the *zakāt*⁵, fast during Ramaḍān, and make pilgrimage to the House⁶ if you are able to do so.” He said, “You have spoken rightly.” We were amazed at him questioning him and saying that he had spoken rightly. He said, “Then tell me about *īmān*⁷.” He said, “It is that you should believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day, and that you should believe in divine destiny, both the good and the evil thereof.” He said, “You have spoken rightly.” He said, “Then tell me about *iḥsān*⁸.” He said, “It is that you should serve Allah as though you could see Him,

¹ *Matn al-Arba‘īn an-Nawawīya fi ‘l-Aḥādīth aṣ-ṣaḥīḥa an-nabawīya*, by Yaḥya ibn Sharaf ad-Dīn an-Nawawī, d. 676 A. H. = 1278 CE an-Nawawī was a famous writer on Jurisprudence. This collection of 42 Traditions, commonly known as “the Forty” (al-Arba‘īn), is widely known and used throughout the Islamic world. It has been translated into Persian, Turkish, Urdu, and Malay, and been made the subject of innumerable commentaries. The “Forty” are commonly memorized by school children from Morocco in the West to the Philippines in the East.

For this translation I consulted *an-Nawawī's Forty Hadith*. Trans. Ibrahim Ezzeddin and Denys Johnson-Davies. 4th ed. (Beirut: Holy Koran Publishing House, 1979.)

² Title given to the Caliphs.

³ The collections of al-Bukhārī (d. 257 A. H. = 870 CE) and Muslim (d. 262 A. H. = 875 CE) are both entitled *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and are often referred to as *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥān*, “the two Genuines.” No Tradition that is found in these two collections would be disputed by any orthodox Muslim. Muslim is a man’s name as well as meaning any follower of the religion of Islam.

⁴ i.e. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the second caliph

⁵ Often rendered as “alms-tax” or “poor-due,” it is a tax on a man’s wealth and distributed among the poor. (Ezzeddin and Johnson-Davies)

⁶ The Ka’ba and Holy Mosque in Mecca.

⁷ *īmān* is generally rendered as “religious belief” or “faith.” However, being a fundamental term in Islam, the Arabic word has been retained. (Ezzeddin and Johnson-Davies)

⁸ In this context the word *iḥsān* has a special religious significance and any single rendering of it would be inadequate. Dictionary meanings for *iḥsān* include “right action,” “goodness,” “charity,” “sincerity,” and the like. The root also means “to master or be proficient at” and it is to be found in this meaning in Hadith 17 of the present collection. (Ezzeddin and Johnson-Davies)

for though you cannot see Him, yet He sees you.” He said, “Then tell me about the Hour⁹. He said, “About that the one questioned knows no more than the questioner.” He said, “Then tell me about its signs.” He said, “[They are] that the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress¹⁰ and that you will see the barefooted, naked, destitute herdsmen building arrogantly high houses.¹¹ Then he took himself off and I stayed for a time. Then he [Muḥammad] said, “O ‘Umar, do you know who the questioner was?” I said, “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said, “It was Gabriel, who came to you to teach you your religion.”

Muslim relates this.

3 On the authority of Abū ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ‘Abdullah, the son of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say:

Islam has been built on five [pillars]¹²: testifying that there is no god but Allah and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah, performing the prayers, paying the *zakāt*, making the pilgrimage to the House, and fasting during Ramaḍān.

al-Bukhārī and Muslim relate this.

4 On the authority of Abū ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ūd (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah (the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and he is the truthful, the reliable, reported to us:

Verily the creation of each of you takes place when he is brought together in his mother’s womb. For forty days [he is] as a drop, then he similarly becomes a clot, and then similarly [he becomes like] a bite of meat. Then an angel is sent to him, and he blows the spirit [of life] into him. He [the angel] is commanded about four matters¹³: that he write down his fortune, his life-span, his works, and [whether in the Afterlife he will be] unhappy or happy. By Allah, other than Whom there is no god, verily one of you may work the works of the people of Paradise until there is but an arm’s length between him and it and that which is written will overtake him so that he works the works of the people of the Fire and he enters it. And one of you may work the works of the people of the Fire until there is but an arm’s length between him and it and that which is written will overtake him so that he works the works of the people of Paradise and he enters it.

al-Bukhārī and Muslim relate this.

5 On the authority of the Mother of the Faithful¹⁴, Umm ‘Abdullah ‘Ā’isha (may Allah be pleased with her), who said: The Messenger of Allah (the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

⁹ i.e. of the Day of Judgment.

¹⁰ This phrase is capable of more than one interpretation. Among those given by an-Nawawī in his commentary is that slave-girls will give birth to sons and daughters who will become free and so be the masters of those who bore them. The word *ama*, normally translated “slave-girl,” is also capable of meaning any woman in that we are all slaves or servants of God. The words are thus capable of bearing the meaning: “When a woman will give birth to her master” i.e. a time will come when children will have so little respect for their mothers that they will treat them like servants. The commentators point out that here the word *rabba* (mistress) includes the masculine *rabb* (master). (Ezzeddin and Johnson-Davies)

¹¹ Another translation: “competing in constructing lofty buildings”

¹² The word “pillars” does not appear in the Arabic but has been supplied for clarity of meaning. Pillars (*arkān*) is the generally accepted term in this context. (Ezzeddin and Johnson-Davies)

¹³ lit. “words.”

¹⁴ A title accorded to any of the Prophet’s wives.

Whoever introduces into this affair of ours [i.e., Islam] something that does not belong to it is a reprobate.¹⁵

al-Bukhārī and Muslim relate this. According to one line of transmission in Muslim [it reads]:

Whoever works a work which has for it no command of ours is a reprobate.¹⁶

6 On the authority of Abū ‘Abdullah an-Nu‘mān, the son of Bashīr (may Allah be pleased with them both), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say:

Verily what is lawful is obvious¹⁷, and what is unlawful is obvious, and between them are doubtful matters about which most people do not know [what to do]. He who is on his guard with respect to doubtful matters keeps his religion and his honor clean, but he who stumbles in doubtful matters stumbles into what is unlawful (*al-ḥarām*), like the shepherd who pastures [his flock] around a sanctuary, all but grazing in it. Truly every king has a sanctuary, and truly the sanctuary of Allah is his forbidden things¹⁸. Is it not true that in the body there is a bite of meat which, if it is healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted? Truly it is the heart.

al-Bukhārī and Muslim relate this.

7 On the authority of Abū Ruqayya Tamīm ibn Aus as-Dārī (may Allah be pleased with him) [who said]: The Prophet of Allah (the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

Religion is sincerity.¹⁹ We said, “To whom?” He said, “To Allah and His Book, and His Messenger, and the leaders (Imāms) of the Muslims, and their common folk.”²⁰

Muslim relates this.

8 On the authority of Ibn ‘Umar²¹ (with whom and with whose father may Allah be pleased) that the Messenger of Allah (the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

I have been commanded that I do battle with people until they testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah and they perform the prayers and pay the *zakāt*. And if they have done this, they have will have gained protection from me for their lives²²

¹⁵ Another translation: “will have it rejected.”

¹⁶ This Tradition in either of the forms is a warning against “innovation” (*bid’a*), the fear of which has ever been present to the Muslim theologians.

¹⁷ *bayyin* — clear, plain, evident, obvious

¹⁸ Other translations: “His prohibitions” and “His sacred place”

¹⁹ The Arabic word *naṣīḥa* has a variety of meanings, the most common being “good advice,” which is obviously unsuitable in the context. It also gives the meaning of “doing justice to a person or situation,” “probity,” “integrity,” and the like. (Ezzeddin and Johnson-Davies)

²⁰ *amma* — generality, commonality; the masses

²¹ i.e. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the second caliph

²² lit. “their blood.”

and their property (except that which is Islam's by right).²³ And their reckoning is with Allah, exalted be He.

al-Bukhārī and Muslim relate this.

9 On the authority of Abū Huraira 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Ṣakhr (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say:

What I have forbidden you, avoid; what I have commanded you [to do], do as much of it as you can.²⁴ What destroyed those [peoples] who were before you was their questionings and their disagreements with their Prophets.

al-Bukhārī and Muslim relate this.

11 On the authority of Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan the son of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the grandson of the Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and the child of his daughter²⁵ one much beloved (with whom and with his mother may Allah be pleased), who said: I memorized from the Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him):

Leave that about which you are in doubt for that about which you are in no doubt.

at-Tirmidhī and an-Nasā'ī²⁶ relate this, at-Tirmidhī saying, "It is a good and genuine Tradition."

13 On the authority of Abū Ḥamza Anas ibn Mālīk (may Allah be pleased with him), the servant²⁷ of the Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), that the Prophet (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

None of you [truly] believes [in Allah and in His religion] until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.

al-Bukhārī and Muslim relate this.

14 On the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah (the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

The blood of a Muslim may not be legally spilt unless he belongs to one of three [classes]: a married man who commits adultery, one who owes his soul for another soul [i.e. a murderer], and one who abandons his religion, [thus becoming] one who splits the community.

al-Bukhārī and Muslim relate this.

²³ I. e. though they save their lives and continue to hold their property, they must pay to the Muslim rulers the lawful taxes.

²⁴ Another translation: "comply with as far as you are able."

²⁵ Another translation: "the one much beloved of him." Lit. "and his fragrant flower." the word *raihāna* was used by the Prophet in respect of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain, the sons of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law.

²⁶ at-Tirmidhī (d. 279 A. H. = 892 CE) compiled the *Jāmi'*, which is usually reckoned the third of the six canonical Collections of Tradition, and an-Nasā'ī (d. 303 A. H. = 915 CE) compiled the *Sunan* which is generally counted the sixth of them.

²⁷ Anas ibn Mālīk, when still a youth, was employed by the Prophet as a servant and is the authority for many Ḥadīth. He is often referred to as "the servant and friend of the Messenger of Allah." (Ezzeddin and Johnson-Davies)

17 On the authority of Abū Ya'ī' Shaddād ibn Aus (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

Verily Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each of you sharpen his blade, and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters.

Muslim relates this.

18 On the authority of Abū Dharr Jundub ibn Junāda al-Ghifārī and Abū 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Mu'ādh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with them both), that the Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

Fear Allah whoever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good one and it will wipe [the former] out, and behave good-naturedly to people.

at-Tirmidhī relates this, saying, "It is a good Tradition." In some copies he says, "It is a good and genuine Tradition."

20 On the authority of Abū Mas'ūd ibn 'Amr al-Anṣārī al-Badrī (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

Among the things that people comprehended from the words of the First Prophecy²⁸ is: If it does not cause you to be ashamed, do whatever you wish.²⁹

al-Bukhārī relates this.

23 On the authority of Abū Mālik al-Ḥārith ibn 'Aṣim al-Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

Purity is half of faith.³⁰ [The repetition of the phrase] *Al-ḥamdu lillāh* ["Praise be to Allah"] will fill the scales [on the Judgment Day], and *Subḥāna 'llāh* ["Exalted be Allah"³¹] and *Al-ḥamdu lil-lāh* ["Praise be to Allah"] will fill all between heaven and earth. Prayer (*aṣ-ṣalāh*) will be a light; alms given in charity (*aṣ-ṣadaqa*) will be a demonstration; patient endurance will be an illumination; the Qur'ān will be an argument for you or against you. Everyone will come [to the Judgment] with his soul at stake, either freeing it or destroying it.

Muslim relates this.

24 On the authority of Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is that among the sayings he relates from his Lord³² (may He be glorified) is that He said:

²⁸ i.e. from those Prophets who preceded Muḥammad.

²⁹ This ḥadīth is recognized as having two possible interpretations: a.) that one may safely act to one's conscience so long as one feels no shame, and b.) that if one is not capable of any feeling of shame, there is nothing to prevent one from behaving as one likes, that is, badly. (Ezzeddin and Johnson-Davies)

³⁰ Another translation: "Purity is the condition of faith."

³¹ Others render: "How far is Allah from every imperfection"

³² This is a *ḥadīth qudsī* (sacred Hadith), i.e. one in which the Prophet reports what has been revealed to him by Allah, though not necessarily in His actual words. A *ḥadīth qudsī* is in no way regarded as part of the Holy Qur'ān. (Ezzeddin and Johnson-Davies)

O My servants, I have forbidden wrong-doing³³ for Myself and have made it forbidden among you, so do not wrong one another. O My servants, all of you are astray except for the one I have guided, so ask guidance of Me and I will guide you. O My servants, all of you are hungry except for the one I have fed, so ask food of Me and I will feed you. O My servants, all of you are naked except for the one I have clothed, so ask clothing of Me and I will clothe you. O My servants, you sin night and day. It is I who forgive all sins, so ask My forgiveness and I will forgive you. O My servants, you will never attain to My power of harming so as to harm Me, nor my power of benefiting so as to benefit Me. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, those of you who are humans and those who are jinn, as good as the most pious heart among you, that would add nothing to My kingdom. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, those of you who are humans and those who are jinn, as wicked as the most wicked heart among you, that would take away nothing from My kingdom. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, those of you who are humans and those who are jinn, to rise in a single place and petition Me and I were to give to each what he asked, that would not lessen what I have anymore than a needle inserted into the ocean [would raise its level]. O My servants, it is your works alone for which I shall hold you to account and then recompense you for, so let him who finds good [in the Hereafter] praise Allah, and he who finds otherwise blame no one but himself.

Muslim relates this.

- 25 On the authority of Abū Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him):

Some of the Companions³⁴ of the Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to the Prophet (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “O Messenger, the rich take all the rewards. They pray just as we do and they fast just as we do, but they can give in charity out of the superabundance of their wealth [and so surpass us in storing up merit that will bring rewards].” He said, “Has not Allah appointed for you what you should give in charitable alms? Truly every *tasbīḥa*³⁵ is an alms, every *takbīra*³⁶ is a charity, every *tahmīda*³⁷ is a charity, and every *tahīla*³⁸ is a charity; to command what is right is a charity, to forbid what is wrong is a charity; and even in sexual intercourse [with one’s wife] there is a charity.” They said, “O Messenger of Allah, [do you mean that] when one of us fulfills his sexual desire [with his wife] there will be for him a reward for that?” He said, “What is your opinion?³⁹ If he put it in a forbidden place, would he not bear responsibility? Likewise, if he puts it in a permitted place, he will have a reward.”⁴⁰

³³ Other translations of *zulm* are: wrong, iniquity, injustice, unfairness; oppression, repression, suppression, tyranny.

³⁴ The Arabic word *Ṣaḥābī* (pl. *Aṣḥāb* or *Ṣaḥāba*) is given to a person who met the Prophet, believed in him, and died a Muslim. (Ezzeddin and Johnson-Davies)

³⁵ To say *Subḥāna ‘Ilāh* (“Exalted be Allah”).

³⁶ To say *Allāhu akbar* (“Allah is most great”).

³⁷ To say *Al-ḥamdu lillāh* (“Praise be to Allah”).

³⁸ To say *Lā ilāha illā ‘Ilāh* (“There is no god but Allah”).

³⁹ lit. “Have you seen?”

⁴⁰ Other translations: “What is your opinion? Had He put it among the things forbidden it would have been sinful for one, so when He put it among the allowable things there was a reward for it also.” and “Do you [not] think that were he to act upon it unlawfully he would be sinning? Likewise, if he has acted upon it lawfully he will have a reward.” (Ezzedin and Johnson-Davies)

Muslim relates this.

- 28 On the authority of Abū Najīḥ al-'Irbāḍ ibn Sāriya (may Allah be pleased with him), who said:

The Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) gave us a sermon by which our hearts were filled with fear and tears came to our eyes. We said: O Messenger of Allah, it is as though this were a farewell sermon, so counsel us. He said, "I counsel you to fear Allah (may He be glorified) and to give absolute obedience even if a slave becomes your leader. Verily he among you who lives [long enough] will see great controversy, so take care to observe my *sunna* and the *sunna* of the rightly-guided Caliphs,⁴¹ holding on to them with your teeth. Beware of matters newly-introduced, for every innovation (*bid'a*) is a going astray (*ḍalāla*, error) and every going astray is in the [Hell-]Fire.

Abū Dāwūd⁴² relates this, as does at-Tirmidhī, who says: "An excellent, genuine Tradition."

- 31 On the authority of Abū 'I-'Abbās Sahl ibn Sa'd as-Sā'idī (may Allah be pleased with him), who said:

A man came to the Prophet (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, tell me what I can do to be loved by Allah and loved by people." He said, "Abstain from this world and Allah will love you; abstain from what people possess and people will love you."

an acceptable Tradition which Ibn Māja⁴³ and others relate with an acceptable *isnād*.⁴⁴

- 36 On the authority of Abū Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

Whoever banishes a believer's worry pertaining to this world, Allah will banish from him some worry pertaining to the Day of Resurrection. Whoever alleviates [the lot of] a needy person, Allah will alleviate [his lot] in this world and the next. Whoever shields a Muslim, Allah will shield him in this world and the next. Allah will help the servant as long as the servant will help his brother. Whoever follows a path to seek knowledge in it, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. No people gathers together in one of the houses of Allah reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves, without tranquility⁴⁵ descending upon them, mercy enveloping them, angels

⁴¹ *sunna* means "customary way of acting," so that in the Qur'ān the way Allah has dealt with former peoples is called "the *sunna* of Allah." To follow Muḥammad's *sunna* is to be a *Sunnī*, as opposed to the people of *Shī'a* who followed the family of 'Alī, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law. The main purpose of the Ḥadīth is to reveal the *sunna* of the Prophet and his Companion. The first four Caliphs were named by later Islam the "rightly-guided" Caliphs, and the period of office in the Caliphate came to be highly idealized.

⁴² Abū Dāwūd (d. 275 A. H. = 888 CE) compiled the collection known as *Sunan*, which is generally regarded as the fourth of the six canonical collections.

⁴³ Ibn Māja (d. 274 A. H. = 887 CE), a Persian from Qazvin, compiled the *Sunan* which is generally counted as the fifth of the six canonical collections.

⁴⁴ Each Tradition in these collections consists of two parts, the *matn* or text, and the *isnād* or chain of authorities by whom it was handed down from the time of the companions of the Prophet to the collectors of the canonical collections.

⁴⁵ The word used here for "tranquility" is *sakīna*, which is the Hebrew word *shekīna*, and shows that this Tradition was drawn from Rabbinic tradition (Tamid 32b) of how the Shekinah descends on those who study the Torah.

surrounding them, and Allah making mention of them among those who are with Him. He whose work detains him⁴⁶ will not be hastened by his [noble] ancestry.”

Muslim relates this in these words.

37 On the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās (with whom and with whose father may Allah be pleased), from the Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), is that among the sayings he relates from his Lord (glorified and exalted be He) is that He said:

“Verily Allah has written down the good deeds and the evil deeds.” Then he clarified that. “Whoever intends to do a good deed but does not do it, Allah writes it down with Himself as a perfect good deed, but if he intends it and does it, Allah write it down with Himself as ten good deeds to seven hundred times, or many times over. But if he intends an evil deed and does not do it, Allah writes it down with Himself as a perfect good deed, and if he intends it and does it, Allah writes it down as one evil deed.”

al-Bukhārī and Muslim relate this in their two Ṣaḥīḥs in these exact words.

40 On the authority of Ibn ‘Umar (with whom and with whose father may Allah be pleased), who said:

The Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) took me by the shoulder and said, “Be in the world as though you were a stranger or a traveler.”

Ibn ‘Umar (with whom and with whose father may Allah be pleased) used to say:

At evening do not expect [to live until] morning, and when morning comes do not expect [to live until] evening. Take from your health for your sickness and from your life for your death.⁴⁷

41 On the authority of Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aṣ (may Allah be pleased with them both), who said: the Messenger of Allah (may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

None of you is a true believer until his inclination is in accordance with what I have brought.

an acceptable and a sound Tradition which we have related in the *Kitāb al-Hujja*, with a genuine *isnād*.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ i.e. on his path to Paradise.

⁴⁷ i.e. while you are in good health you are able to perform your religious duties and should therefore take advantage of this fact. The same applies to the state of being alive. (Ezzedin and Johnson-Davies)

⁴⁸ The compiler has allowed himself to add to two further Hadith to the recognized number of forty, although the title of the work remains “An-Nawawī's Forty.”