‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb (may Allah be pleased with him) recited Sūrat An-Nahl on the pulpit during the Friday sermon, and when he reached the verse of prostration, he got down and prostrated, and so did the people

Rabī‘ah ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Hudayr At-Taymi reported: ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb (may Allah be pleased with him) recited Sūrat An-Nahl on the pulpit during the Friday sermon, and when he reached the verse of prostration, he got down and prostrated, and so did the people. The next Friday, he recited it, and when he reached the verse of prostration, he said: "O people, we pass by verses of prostration. Whoever prostrates has done something right, but there is no sin on those who do not prostrate." ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) did not prostrate (that time). In another version: "Indeed, Allah did not make such prostration (of recitation) obligatory; we can do it if we wish to do so."

[Authentic hadith] [Narrated by Bukhari]

‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb (may Allah be pleased with him) recited Sūrat An-Nahl on the pulpit during the Friday sermon. When he reached the saying of Allah, the Almighty, which reads: {And to Allah prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth of creatures, and the angels [as well], and they are not arrogant. They fear their Lord above them, and they do what they are commanded.} [Sūrat An-Nahl: 49-50] He descended from the pulpit and prostrated, and the people followed suit. The following Friday, he recited the same Sūrah, An-Nahl, and when he reached the verse of prostration, and the people were prepared for prostration, he did not prostrate and asked them to do the same, according to the version in Al-Muwatta’, which reads: "The people got prepared for prostration, but he said: 'Wait! Allah did not prescribe it upon us, except if we wish to do it.' So he did not prostrate, and he prevented them from doing so." Then he added: "O people, we pass by verses of prostration. Whoever prostrates has done something right, but there is no sin on those who do not prostrate," meaning: We come across verses of prostration, and those who prostrate do rightly follow the Sunnah, but those who fail to prostrate incur no sin. ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) did not prostrate at that time to demonstrate that the prostration of recitation is not obligatory. He explained to them, as related in another version, that if we wish, we can prostrate, and if we wish, we may not prostrate. In yet another version: "O people, indeed, Allah has not made it obligatory on us to offer the prostration of recitation." In sum, this stance was reportedly taken by the Commander of the Faithful in a Friday sermon before all the Companions, none of whom criticized him for that, which indicates their approval. In such a situation, the opinion of a Companion constitutes reliable evidence, and more so if it is that of a rightly-guided Caliph, who is more worthy of

acting upon the Sunnah. Moreover, as this opinion was stated in the presence of all Companions, this means that it enjoyed unanimous agreement.

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