
The ruling on the one who abandons Prayer 1

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Question no.5: “What is the ruling on the one who abandons the prayer? And what is the difference between *al-kufr ul-‘amalee*¹ (the disbelief related to actions) and *al-kufr ul-‘itiqaadee*² (the disbelief related to faith)?”

Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)³ answers:

“The one who abandons the prayer has two states: either he believes in its legislation or he denies its legislation. So regarding this second state, he is a disbeliever by the consensus of the Muslims. And likewise, whoever denies a matter from the religion that a Muslim cannot be ignorant about – for example, whoever denies (the legislation of) fasting, Hajj and whatever else there is of matters known by all the Muslims to be necessities of the religion – then he is a disbeliever. So there is no difference of opinion about this: whoever denies the legislation of the prayer is a disbeliever.

But if there is a man who does not deny (the legislation) of the prayer and who acknowledges its legislation, but with respect to action, he does not perform it, he does not pray – maybe he does not pray at all and maybe he prays sometimes – so in this case, if we said that this man has disbelieved, this statement would not apply to him at all, because *kufr* (disbelief) is denial, and he is not denying the legislation of the prayer, as (Allaah), the Most High, said with regard to the disbelievers: **And they denied them (those *Aayaat*)..., though their ownelves were convinced thereof.**⁴

So if we take as an example so-and-so from the people who does not pray, but when he is asked ‘Why don’t you pray O my brother?’, he says to you, ‘Allaah will forgive me, by Allaah the worldly life has kept me busy, these children have kept me busy,’ and this type of talk. Of course, this talk is not an excuse for him at all, but he presents us a benefit which we didn’t know because we can’t know what is in his heart. He presents us a benefit that the man believes in the legislation of the prayer, as opposed to if the answer was, may Allaah forbid: ‘O my brother, the time for this prayer is gone; this was during a time when the people were not educated, they were unclean, they were in need of a specific nature of cleanliness, purity and exercise, and now the time for this has gone; now there are new means that free us of prayer’ – this (man) has disbelieved and thus (goes) to **‘Hell, and worst indeed is that destination’**.⁵ As for if the answer is the first (example): ‘Why don’t you pray?’ (and he says,) ‘Allaah will forgive us, may Allaah curse the *Shaytaan*,’ and this type of talk that informs us that the man is not denying the legislation of the prayer, then if we said that this man is a disbeliever, we would be contradicting the reality, because this man is a believer, a believer in the legislation of the prayer and a believer in all of Islaam, so how can we declare him a disbeliever?

Therefore, we say that there is no difference between the one who abandons the prayer and the one who abandons fasting and the one who abandons Hajj and the one who abandons anything

¹ i.e., minor kufr

² i.e., major kufr

³ (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him

⁴ Surat un-Naml, 27:14

⁵ Surah Aal ‘Imraan, 3:162

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from the acts of worship related to actions – (there is no difference) with regard to (judging whether) he is to be declared a disbeliever or not. **When is he declared a disbeliever? If he denies. When is he not declared a disbeliever? If he believes.** So it is not allowed – by consensus – to declare the believer to be a disbeliever. And many narrations have come in accordance with this...: '(Allaah will say): **Make whoever (sincerely) said *laa ilaaha illallaah* (none has the right to be worshiped but Allaah) enter Paradise,' while he does not have a (good) deed equal to the weight of an atom, but he has the weight of an atom of *Eemaan* (faith), so this *Eemaan* is what prevents him from dwelling in the Fire forever, and he enters Paradise even if it is after he becomes a black coal.**⁶ However, this is the one who bears witness that none has the right to be worshiped but Allaah and that Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is the Messenger of Allaah, and he believes in all that has come from Allaah and His Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم); but he does not pray, or does not fast or does not perform Hajj or the like, or he steals or fornicates – there is no difference with regard to all these affairs when placed on the scales of disbelief related to actions and disbelief related to faith [because since he has faith, these impermissible actions do not fall under disbelief related to faith / major kufr].

For instance, a man commits fornication; do we declare him a disbeliever? You will say, no. I say, no. Don't be hasty. We have to see, does he say that *zinaa* (fornication) is prohibited? Does he say as some of the ignorant ones say: 'there is no haraam and there is no halaal'? If he says to me (such a) statement, he has disbelieved. Likewise, the one who steals and any (other) sin – for example, the man who backbites people, and we say to him: 'Fear Allaah, the Messenger (of Allaah) (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: **'Backbiting is you mentioning about your brother that which he dislikes,'**⁷ and he says: 'There is no 'the Messenger said' and such-and-such,' (then) he has disbelieved. In this manner, (the same applies to) all the Islaamically legislated rulings, whether it is a positive ruling, i.e., one of the obligatory duties, or a negative ruling, i.e., the prohibitions that he must keep away from. **So, if he regards any of these prohibitions to be permissible in his heart, he has disbelieved. But if he falls into it by way of action while believing that he is disobeying (Allaah), he has not disbelieved.**

So there is no difference with regard to this between all the Islaamically legislated rulings, whether they are from the obligatory duties or prohibitions. The obligatory duties must be carried out and it is not permissible to leave them off, but whoever leaves them out of laziness, it is not allowed to declare him a disbeliever. Whoever leaves them out of denial has disbelieved; whoever regards any of the forbidden things to be permissible has likewise disbelieved. There is no difference with regard to this at all between the obligations and prohibitions."

asaheeha translations

⁶ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree no.7439, no.7510, no.6560; Saheeh at-Targheeb no.3639, no.3641

⁷ Saheeh Muslim no.2589