

The rulling of the one who abandons prayer (Part 3)

source: silsilat ul-hudā wa nnūr ~ the series of guidance and light ~ tape no.

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Question #10: “What about the hadīth: ‘whoever abandons the prayer has disbelieved?’”[1] Shaykh al-Albānī answers:

“This is not the first hadīth in which it is said that whoever does such-and-such has disbelieved. You have the famous hadīth ‘whoever swears by other than Allāh has disbelieved,’[2] but we don’t say that whoever says ‘by the life of my father’ has apostatized from his religion.[3] And you know, for example, the hadīth of ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb in Sahīh al-Bukhārī when the Messenger (of Allāh) (صلى الله عليه وسلم) heard him swearing by his father, so he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: ‘Don’t swear by your fathers; whoever of you swears, then let him swear by Allāh or keep silent.’[4] And in the hadīth of (‘Umar’s) son ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Umar, he said that the Messenger (of Allāh) (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: ‘Whoever swears by other than Allāh has associated partners with Him,’[5] and in another narration, ‘he has disbelieved.’

So it is not necessary for the occurrence of the expression ‘whoever does such-and-such has disbelieved’ to mean that he has disbelieved with the disbelief of apostasy. Rather, it can have many meanings, such as for example: ‘he has disbelieved’ can mean that he is close to disbelieving, that he has disbelieved with the disbelief related to actions (i.e., minor kufr), and such meanings that the people of knowledge were obliged to (apply) in order to reconcile between the texts.

‘Whoever abandons the prayer has disbelieved.’ (But also) we say, ‘whoever says lā ilāha illAllāh[6] (sincerely) will enter Paradise;’[7] ‘whoever says laa ilāha illAllāh (sincerely), it will benefit him some day,’[8] [9] as mentioned in the hadīth of al-Bazzār and others. (Another hadīth mentions that) ‘whichever

slave runs away from his master has disbelieved.’[10] These expressions are very numerous: ‘he has disbelieved, he has disbelieved.’ And there isn’t any hadīth that is interpreted like this upon its apparent meaning if it comes with the expression: ‘he has disbelieved.’ This hadīth – ‘whoever abandons the prayer has disbelieved’ – is treated the same way as the other narrations which share the saying ‘he has disbelieved’ with the hadīth about prayer. So here, many interpretations can occur for this text as for many (other) narrations. For example, ‘the tale-carrier[11] will not enter Paradise,’[12] (but) does that mean that he has disbelieved because of his tale-carrying? The answer is: if he considers that to be permissible by his heart, then Paradise has been forbidden for him. And if he acknowledges the forbiddance of that, and admits that he is wrong, a sinner and an evildoer, then his affair is with Allāh, as He, the Mighty and Majestic, said: ‘Verily, Allāh forgives not that partners should be set up with Him (in worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills.’[13] So abandoning the prayer is an action that leads its doer to die upon other than īmān (faith) – and Allāh’s protection is sought. And abandoning the prayer is from the characteristics of the disbelievers who don’t pray and don’t give the zakāh (obligatory charity). Hence, if the Muslim does not pray, he has resembled the disbelievers. So his disbelief here is the disbelief related to actions [as long as he believes in the legislation of the prayer]. And the narrations which must be explained (with regard to their true meanings) are very numerous.

For instance, during the farewell pilgrimage, (the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)) ordered Jarīr bin ‘Abdillāh al-Bajalī to quiet the people down and make them listen, and he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said while addressing them: ‘Do not return to being

disbelievers after me by striking the necks of one another.’[14] And he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: ‘Insulting a Muslim is disobedience (to Allāh), and fighting him is disbelief.’[15] But if a Muslim kills or fights another Muslim, has this (person) apostatized from his religion? The answer is: no, because Allāh said: {And if two parties or groups among the believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them both. But if one of them outrages against the other, then fight you (all) against the one that which outrages till it complies with the Command of Allāh}.[16] He considered each of the two groups – the one outraging and the one being outraged – to be from the believers, although the Messenger (of Allāh) said in the previous hadīth that ‘insulting a Muslim is disobedience (to Allāh) and fighting him is disbelief.’ So how is disbelief interpreted here? It is minor disbelief; it is disbelief related to actions. And the narrations about prayer – which declare that the one who abandons the prayer has disbelieved – are also (interpreted) likewise: either it is said that he is close to the disbelief related to faith (i.e., major kufr), that he is close to dying upon other than the religion of Islām, or (it is said) that he has disbelieved with the disbelief related to actions. This interpretation is necessary so that we don’t contradict the narrations of the Messenger (of Allaah) (صلى الله عليه وسلم) with one another.”

~ asaheeha translations ~

[1] Sahīh at-Tirmithī #2621

[2] Sahīh at-Tirmithī #1535

[3] swearing by other than Allāh can become major disbelief when the one swearing believes that the one whom he falsely swears by has the ability to avert harm from him and the like; refer to The Methodology of the Saved Sect by Shaykh Muhammad bin Jamīl Zaynū, p. 101

[4] Sahīh an-Nasā’ī #3775, Sahīh aj-Jāmi’ #1923

[5] Sahīh at-Tirmithī #1535

[6] none has the right to be worshiped but Allāh

[7] Silsilat ul-Ahādīth is-Sahīha #2355

[8] i.e., even if he first enters the Fire to be punished therein

[9] Sahīh aj-Jāmi’ #6434

[10] Sahīh Muslim #68

[11] the tale-carrier is the one who spreads the speech of the people among one another with the intention of causing corruption, such as you going to someone and saying: 'such-and-such person insulted you, and he said such-and-such thing about you, etc' so that you separate between them; refer to Shaykh Muhammad bin Sālih al-'Uthaymīn in Nūrun 'alā ddarb tape #48a and Silsilatu Liqā il-Bāb il-Maftūh tape #93a

[12] Sahīh al-Bukhārī #6056, Sahīh Muslim #105

[13] Sūrat un-Nisā, 4:48

[14] Sahīh al-Bukhārī #4405

[15] Sahīh al-Bukhārī #6044

[16] Sūrat ul-Hujurāt, 49:9