

Admitting The Oneness Of

Allah

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What is worship [‘Ibadah] ?

·linguistic meaning:

The term ‘Ibadah in Arabic dictionary means submission and surrender. For example, it is said in Arabic: a submissive camel or a trodden path i.e. a path where people always tread.

·Technical meaning:

It incorporates many definitions as follows:

Sheikh al-Islam ibn Taymiya defined worship as: “It is a comprehensive term that encompasses all what Allah loves of words and deeds whether inward or outward [1].”

Ibn al-Qayim said: “Worship is the utmost degrees of love to Allah while accompanied by complete surrender [2].”

Sheikh ibn Sa’di gave many definitions to the term ‘Ibadah including: “love and submission to Allah are the essence and core of worship. The complete love and submission to Allah is the reality of worship. If these two concepts or any of them is missed, it is not considered a true worship. This is because submitting oneself to Allah is the core of worship which cannot be achieved except through a perfect love out of which the love of everything else follows [3].”

In another definition, Sheikh ibn Sa’di said: “Worship or ‘Ibadah is a comprehensive term includes all what Allah loves of beliefs, inward and outward deeds. Doing good deeds or refraining from sins are considered a worship which draws a person closer to Allah. Likewise, a person who abandons sins for Allah’s sake also worships his Lord and gets closer to Him [4].”

Here, it is worthy to mention that there are two concepts related to the term worship [5]:

- The verb or the action in itself “to worship”.
- The object or the means the draws the worshipper nearer to Allah.

Prayer as an example:

- Performing prayer is an act of worship
- It is also a means to get nearer to Allah.

Based on this, according to the second concept, worship can be defined in accordance with the opinion of ibn Taymiya. According to the first concept, it can be defined in accordance to the second and third definition.

However, the fourth definition of ibn Sa'di incorporates the two concepts.

Moreover, from among the definitions of the term worship is this one which states: "It is the good deeds that a person does willingly for the sake of Allah Almighty with no partner [6]."

This definition also includes both concepts.

Difference between 'Ibadah and Tawhid al-'Ibdah [worshipping none but Allah]:

There is an apparent difference between the two concepts: worship is an act in itself through which a worshipper gets closer to Allah while Tawhid al-'Ibadah means to worship none but Allah.

[1] See al-'Ubudiyya p.38.

[2] See al-Kafiya Ash-Shafiya fi al-Intisar by al-Najiya sect p.32.

[3] See al-Haqq al-Wadih al-Mubin pages 59-60.

[4] Cited from Sheikh Adb Ar-Rahman ibn Sa'di and his efforts to clarify the issues of 'Aqida p.162.

[5] See al-Qawl al-Mufid 'ala KitabAt-Tawhid by Sheikh Mohammed ibn 'Uthaimin vol.1, p.10.

[6] See 'Ubudiyat al-Ka'inat Li Rab al-'Alamin by Farid At-Toni p.25.

Mandatory Conditions for accepting acts of worship

There are two main conditions for accepting one's worship:

- Sincerity [Ikhlas].
- Following in the footsteps of Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him).

Scholarly opinion :

Sheikh al-Islam, ibn Taymiya said: "The religion of Islam is based on two main principles: to worship none but Allah through what He has legislated [Shari'ah] and not through innovation [Bid'a] as per His words, "So whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord - let him do righteous work and not associate in the worship of his Lord anyone" [Al-Kahf:110]. This incorporates admitting the two testifications of faith [Ash-Shahada]—i.e. to testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. The first part of the Shahada confirms the Oneness of Allah and the second part confirms that Muhammad (pbuh) is the Messenger who conveyed Allah's Message; thus, we have to believe in what he said and obey his commands.[1]"

Therefore, whoever wants to worship Allah, he must abide by these two conditions along with being convinced that He seeks Allah's guidance through what He Almighty has Legislated.

Al-Fudail ibn 'Iyad commented on the words of Allah in Surah al-Mulk , the second verse "to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed": "The best in deeds here means the most sincere and right deed." People asked him: "What does the most sincere and right deed mean?" He replied: "If one's deed is done sincerely but in a wrong way, it would not be accepted; if a deed is done in a right way but not out of sincerity, it would not be accepted. A deed is only accepted when it is done out of sincerity and in a right way. A sincere deed that one does for Allah's sake and in a right way means that a person follows in the Sunnah [of the Prophet] in doing it.[2]"

Hence, if these two conditions or any of them are neglected, one's worship will be invalid.

Examples:

-If a person performed prayers for other than Allah and contradicted the manner prescribed by the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) in offering it, his prayer will be rejected by Allah. This is because his act of worship [prayer] lack the two main conditions for accepting it [i.e. Ikhlas and following the Prophet].

-Likewise, if a person follows the teachings of the Prophet in offering his prayer but he prays for other than Allah, his worship will be invalid. This is because his worship lack sincerity. Allah Almighty says,

Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills.[An-Nisa':48]

But if they had associated others with Allah , then worthless for them would be whatever they were doing.[Al-'An'am:88]

-If a person offers his prayer for Allah's sake [sincerity]; however, he deviated from the manner prescribed by the Prophet (pbuh) in offering it, his worship will be invalid because it lacks following in the footsteps of the Messenger (pbuh). The Prophet (pbuh) said in the hadith: "Whoever does a deed which contradicts our religion, it will be rejected.[3]" in another phrasing of the hadith, it was reported that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "Whoever brings innovation to our religion, it will be rejected.[4]"

In fact, these two conditions are inseparable. Meaning, sincerity necessitates following the Prophet (pbuh) while following the Prophet necessitates sincerity.

[1] See Al-'Ubudiyya p.170.

[2] See Al-'Ubudiyya p. 76.

[3]Recorded by Muslim (1718) and Ahmed (vol.6, p.146).

[4] Recorded by Bukhari (vol.3, p.167) and Muslim (1718).

Importance of sincerity and following the teachings of Allah's Messenger

Evidence from the Qur'an on the importance of sincerity and following the teachings of Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) which are considered the two conditions for accepting worship:

Allah commanded His believing servants not to associate partners in worshipping Him. He Almighty says: "and invoke Him, sincere to Him in religion." [Al-'Araf: 29]

Allah Almighty is the only Legislator and none is entitled to legislate but Him. Whoever worships Allah through anything which He did not legislate, he thus associates partners with Allah the Exalted. Allah Almighty says: "He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad]." [Ash-Shura: 13]

"And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way." [Al-'An'am: 153]

Allah rebukes whoever brings forth a legislation from his own as per His words: "Or have they other deities who have ordained for them a religion to which Allah has not consented?" [Ash-Shura: 21]

Allah has perfected the religion for us and He chose Islam for us as per His words: "This day those who disbelieve have despaired of [defeating] your religion; so fear them not, but fear Me. This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion." [Al-Ma'ida: 3] Therefore, bringing innovation into the religion is deemed a transgression against Allah and His Messenger and attributing imperfection to His religion.

If it were permitted for every person to worship Allah according to the way he wishes, life will be unbearable and dispute will prevail due to difference of views which in turn leads to dissention. On the contrary, abandoning innovations and following the way of the Messenger is a great means for achieving agreement and unity.

If it were permitted to people to worship Allah according to their wishes, this will result in doing without Messengers which cannot be accepted by people of discern [1].

[1] Excerpted from a pamphlet on Tawhid authored by Sheikh Dr. Abdullah al-Jasir.

Which one does prevail: Hope or Fear?

There are different opinions on this issue as follows:

-A person must give precedence to fear which leads him to obey Allah and refrain from committing sins.

-A person must give precedence to hope and be optimistic since the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) appreciated optimism.

-A person must give precedence to hope in case of obeying Allah which urges him to do good deeds. A person here believes that Allah will accept his deeds as long as he has granted him success in doing it. Some of the righteous predecessors [Salaf] stated: "If Allah grants you success in supplication [Du'aa], be sure that He responds to it as per His words: Call upon Me; I will respond to you [Ghafir:60]." As for committing sins, a person must give precedence to fear which is a deterrent from doing bad deeds as per the words of Allah Almighty: "Say, "Indeed I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day" [Al-'An'am:15]. This is almost near to the truth; however, this may be objected to through the words of Allah: "And they who give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord." [Al-Mu'minun:60]

-A person must give precedence to fear in case of health and hope in case of illness.

-Fear and hope are like the two wings of a bird. A believer follows the path of Allah through these two wings (fear and hope). When the two wings are equal, a bird perfectly flies; otherwise, it will not. If the two wings are broken, the bird will die.

-Degrees of fear and hope differ from one person to another and from one condition to another. Allah knows best.

Fear between obligation and recommendation:

Obligatory fear: it is that which urges a Muslim to do good deeds and refrain from committing sins.

Recommended fear: it urges a Muslim to do recommended actions and abandon detested matters.

(1) See al-Adab al-Shar'ya by ibn Muflih (vol.2, pages 30-32), al-Qawl al-Mufid (vol.1, pages 51-52 and vol.2, pages 164-165) and the thesis on love, fear and hope by the author of this article.

Different kinds of worship

There are different kinds of worship which fall into the following:

Verbal such as testifying that there is no god but Allah [La Illaha illa Allah].

Practical such as striving in the cause of Allah [Jihad] and removing harm from the way of people.

Spiritual such as that relating to the Muslim's relation with his Lord including modesty, love, fear, hope and the like.

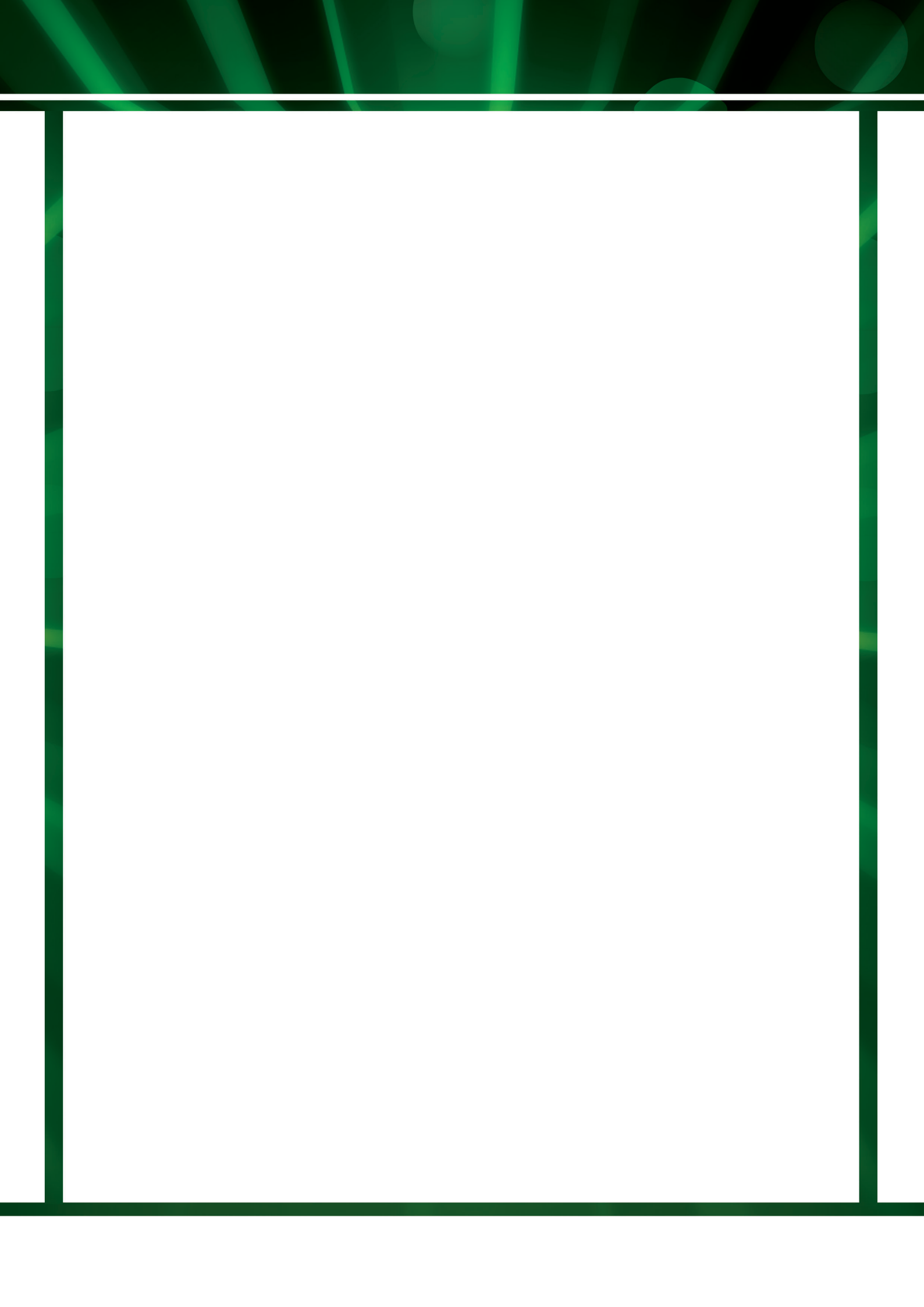
Acts of worship which combine all of these kinds such as prayer.

In addition to what is previously mentioned, worship also includes the following kinds:

- Zakat [alms giving].
- Fasting.
- Hajj [major pilgrimage].
- Telling the truth.
- Fulfilling trust.
- Dutifulness to parents.
- Maintaining the ties of kinship.
- Fulfilling covenants.
- Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil.
- Fighting against the hypocrites and disbelievers.
- Being kind to orphans, poor, wayfarer, servants and animals.
- Du'aa[supplication].
- Dhikr[remembrance of Allah].
- Slaughtering sacrificial animals.
- Vows [for Allah's sake].
- Seeking refuge in Allah from evils.
- Asking Allah for help and support.
- Tawakul[Putting trust in Allah].
- Repentance.
- Istighfar[Asking Allah for forgiveness].

It is impermissible to dedicate such acts of worship to anyone but Allah; and whoever does this is considered a polytheist [mushrik].

[1]See Tayseer al-'Aziz al-Hamid pages 39-42, Al-Irshad by Sheikh Salih al-Fawazan p.19 and 'Aqidat At-Tawhid by Sheikh Mohammed Khalil Harras pages 47-70.





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