152359 - Response concerning the hadeeth of ‘Ubaadah ibn as-Saamit which appears to suggest that the one who does not pray does not become a disbeliever

the question

I read a fatwa on your website which says that the one who does not pray out of carelessness and laziness is an apostate, whereas I came across a hadeeth which appears to contradict what you said in your fatwa: “There are five prayers that Allah has enjoined. Whoever does wudoo’ properly for them and offers them on time, bowing properly and focusing with due humility, will have a promise from Allah that He will forgive him, and whoever does not do that will not have such a promise from Allah; if He wills He will forgive him and if He wills He will punish him.” Narrated by Maalik, Abu Dawood, an-Nasaa’i and Ibn Hibbaan; classed as saheeh by a number of imams (leading scholars). What we know is that Allah does not forgive the disbeliever, and the apostate is a disbeliever. So how are the words in this hadeeth, “if He wills He will forgive him and if He wills He will punish him” to be interpreted?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This hadeeth was narrated by Abu Dawood (425) and Ahmad (22196) from ‘Ubaadah ibn as-Saamit (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “There are five prayers that Allah, may He be exalted, has enjoined. Whoever does wudoo’ properly for them and offers them on time, bowing properly and focusing with due humility, will have a promise from Allah that He will forgive him, and whoever does not do that will not have such a promise from Allah; if He wills He will forgive him and if He wills He will punish him.” Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Sunan Abi Dawood.

The words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “If Allah wills He will forgive him” are quoted as evidence by those who think that the one who does not pray does not become

a disbeliever. They say: If the one who does not pray becomes a disbeliever, he would not come under the divine will (as mentioned here). But I respond to this argument as follows:

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the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “and whoever does not do that” refer to what precedes them, i.e., the one who does not do the five daily prayers in the manner mentioned above, namely offering them on time, bowing properly, focusing with due humility and doing wudoo’ well. The one who does not do that, by falling short with regard to any of the things mentioned above, such as delaying the prayer until the time from it is over, or not focusing with due humility or bowing properly and so on, is subject to the will of Allah, may He be exalted.

Based on that, the one who is referred to in the hadeeth is the one who prays, but he does not do the prayer properly.

The hadeeth was also narrated in a version which mentions praying regularly. Ibn Maajah (1403) narrated from Abu Qataadah ibn Rib‘i (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), that he said: “Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, said: ‘I have enjoined on your ummah five prayers and I have made a covenant with Myself that whoever prays them regularly on time, I will admit him to Paradise, and whoever does not pray them regularly, has no such covenant with Me.’” Classed as hasan by Shaykh al-Albaani in Saheeh Sunan Ibn Maajah.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) stated that praying regularly means doing the prayer on time, as enjoined by Allah. Not praying regularly means doing the prayer after the time for it has ended. This is what is meant by neglecting the prayer in the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “But then they were succeeded by generations who neglected their prayers” [Maryam 19:59]. As for giving up the prayer, that means not praying, either on time or after the time has ended.

Then he (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Once the difference between the two matters is

understood, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) only described as being subject to the divine will the one who does not pray regularly, not the one who abandons prayer. Saying that they do not pray regularly implies that they pray but they do not do so regularly; it does not include those who do not pray regularly [This is how it appears in Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa. Perhaps the correct version is: it does not include those who do not pray.] If it did include them (those who do not pray on time), they would undoubtedly be subject to execution as disbelievers and apostates.

End quote from Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (7/615)

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It may be that the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “and whoever does not do that” refer to the one who does not offer every prayer; rather he prays sometimes and does not pray sometimes.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said in ash-Sharh al-Mumti‘ (2/34):

There are hadeeths that appear to contradict the hadeeths that indicate (that the one who does not pray) is a disbeliever… That includes hadeeths that speak of the matter in ambiguous terms, which should be interpreted in light of the texts that are unambiguous, such as the hadeeth of ‘Ubaadah ibn as-Saamit (may Allah be pleased with him): “There are five prayers that Allah, may He be exalted, has enjoined. Whoever does wudoo’ properly for them and offers them on time, bowing properly and focusing with due humility, will have a promise from Allah that He will forgive him, and whoever does not do that will not have such a promise from Allah; if He wills He will forgive him and if He wills He will punish him.” This may be understood as referring to the one who does not do the prayers in the manner described, which is bowing and prostrating properly and focusing with proper humility.

Or it may be understood as meaning that he does not offer all the prayers; rather he prays sometimes and does not pray sometimes.

Or it may be understood as meaning that he does not do a single one of them; rather he neglects all of them.

If the hadeeth may be interpreted in all these ways, then it is ambiguous, so it should be interpreted in a way that is in accordance with the unambiguous texts. End quote.

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 5208 and 2182

And Allah knows best.