

120 - Ruling on praying in congregation in the mosque

the question

What is the ruling on praying in congregation in the mosque, and what is the evidence for that?

Summary of answer

Praying in congregation in the mosque is obligatory for men who are able to do it, according to the correct scholarly view, based on a great deal of evidence, including the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “By the One in Whose hand is my soul, I was thinking of issuing instructions that firewood be collected, then I would issue instructions that the call to prayer be given, then I would instruct a man to lead the people in prayer, then I would leave them and go and burn the houses of some men. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, if one of them knew that he would find a meaty bone or a sheep’s foot, he would attend ‘Isha’ prayer.”

Detailed answer

Praying in congregation in the mosque is obligatory for men who are able to do it, according to the correct scholarly view, based on a great [deal of evidence](#), including the following:

-1-

Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And when you are among them and lead them in prayer, let a group of them stand [in prayer] with you and let them carry their arms. And when they have prostrated, let them be [in position] behind you and have the other group come forward which has not [yet] prayed and let them pray with you, taking precautions and carrying their arms. Those who disbelieve wish that you would neglect your weapons and your baggage so they could come down upon you in one [single] attack. But there is no blame upon you, if you are troubled by rain or are ill, for putting

down your arms, but take precaution. Indeed, Allah has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment}

[an-Nisa' 4:102].

What we conclude from this text is as follows:

1. Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, instructed them to pray in congregation, then He repeated this instruction for the second group, by saying: {have the other group come forward which has not [yet] prayed and let them pray with you}.

This indicates that praying in congregation is obligatory for individuals, because Allah, may He be Glorified, did not waive that obligation from the second group when the first group did it. If praying in congregation was Sunnah (and not obligatory), then the most appropriate excuse to waive it would be fear, and if it were a communal obligation, it would be waived once the first group had done it. Thus this verse indicates that it is obligatory on every individual.

Here we see three points:

1. Allah enjoined it first;
2. Then He enjoined it a second time;
3. He did not grant them a concession allowing them to not do it in the case of fear.

-2-

The report which was soundly narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim, from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), according to which the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “By the One in Whose hand is my soul, I was thinking of issuing instructions that firewood be collected, then I would issue instructions that the call to prayer be given, then I would instruct a man to lead the people in prayer, then I would leave them and go and burn the houses of some men. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, if one of them knew that he would find a meaty bone or a sheep’s foot, he would attend ‘Isha’ prayer.”

-3-

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The most burdensome prayers for the hypocrites are ‘Isha’ and Fajr. If they knew what there is in them, they would come even if they had to crawl. I was thinking of ordering that the iqamah for prayer be given, then I would tell a man to lead the people in prayer, and I would set out with men carrying bundles of firewood, and go to people who do not attend the prayer and burn their houses down around them.” Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

-4-

Imam Ahmad narrated that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Were it not for the fact that there are women and children in the houses, I would order that the iqamah be given for ‘Isha’ prayer, and I would order my servants to burn down the houses with everyone in them.”

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not do what he was thinking of because of the reason that he mentioned which prevented him from doing that, namely the fact that there were people in the houses for whom prayer in congregation was not obligatory, women and children, so if he had burned down the houses with them inside, the punishment would have included people who were not obliged to pray in congregation.

-5-

Muslim narrated in his *Sahih* that a blind man said: O Messenger of Allah, I do not have any guide to take me to the mosque. And he asked the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to grant him a concession allowing him to pray in his house, and he allowed him that. When he turned to leave, he called him back and said: “Can you hear the call to prayer?” He said: Yes. He said: “Then answer it.”

That man was Ibn Umm Maktum. In *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad* and *Sunan Abi Dawud* it was narrated that ‘Amr ibn Umm Maktum said: I said: O Messenger of Allah, I am a blind man whose home is far away (from the mosque) and I have a guide who is not reliable. Can you grant me a

concession allowing me to pray in my house? He said: "Can you hear the call?" He said: Yes. He said: "Then I cannot grant you a concession."

When there is an instruction without qualification, it means that it is obligatory, so how about if the Lawgiver stated that there is no concession for someone who is blind, lives far away from the mosque and has a guide who is not reliable? If anyone were to have a choice between praying on his own or in congregation, the one who would be most deserving of being given this choice would be someone like this blind man.

-6-

It was narrated by Abu Dawud and by Abu Hatim ibn Hibban in his *Sahih* that Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever hears the call should respond to it unless he has a valid excuse." They said: What would constitute a valid excuse? He said: Fear or sickness; then the prayer that he does not offer in the mosque will not be accepted from him.

-7-

Muslim narrated in his *Sahih* that 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) said: Whoever would like to meet Allah tomorrow as a Muslim, let him regularly offer these prayers where the call to prayer is given, for Allah has prescribed the ways of guidance to your Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and they (the prayers) are among the ways of guidance. If you pray in your houses like this one who stays away from the mosque prays in his house, you will have forsaken the Sunnah of your Prophet, and if you forsake the Sunnah of your Prophet you will go astray. There is no man who purifies himself and purifies himself well, then he goes to one of these mosques, but Allah will record one good deed for him for every step he takes, and will raise him in status one degree thereby, and will erase one bad deed thereby. I remember when no one would stay away from it but a hypocrite whose hypocrisy was known, and a man would be brought staggering between two others all the way until they bring him to stand in the row. According to another version, he said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and

peace of Allah be upon him) taught us the ways of guidance, and one of the ways of guidance is praying in the mosque in which the call to prayer is given.

What we conclude from this text is as follows:

Staying away from praying in congregation was one of the signs of the hypocrites whose hypocrisy was well known. We ask Allah to help us to remember Him, give thanks to Him and worship Him properly.

For more information, please see the answers to questions no. [72398](#) and [40113](#).

And Allah knows best.