5430 - Can You Pray Without Wudu and Tayammum?

the question

I am a Muslim who is in a wheelchair.
My question is about wudu/ablution I am unable to grip with my hands. I have a health care provider in the morning after fajr who gives me a full bath daily. Is this sufficient for the whole day? I tried clean dust or sand but could not wipe my face completely and had a hard time putting hands in sand/dust. Please give advice.

Summary of answer

If you cannot perform wudu, you can do taymmum. But if it is too difficult to do tayammum, then it is permissible to pray without wudu and tayammum.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Can you pray without wudu and tayammum?

Islam came to make things easy for people and not to burden them with things they cannot do. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Allah burdens not a person beyond his scope. He gets reward for that (good) which he has earned, and he is punished for that (evil) which he has earned.” [Al-Baqarah 2:286]

Allah has enjoined wudu upon the Muslims, but because He knows that some of them are weak and unable to do it, He has granted them a concession and has prescribed tayammum as an alternative to water, and made it a means of purification for the Muslim.

But if it is too difficult to do tayammum , then it is permissible to pray without wudu and without

tayammum . This is like the case of one who cannot find a garment to cover his ‘awrah in prayer; it is permissible for him to pray without a garment.

If someone can help you to do ghusl or wudu , then all well and good, and that will suffice you for the rest of the day so long as you do not break that wudu in any way.

If you do tayammum for yourself or if someone else does it for you, it is sufficient to pass your hand over the dust, and wipe whatever you can of your face.

You may also – because of hardship and sickness – put two prayers together if it is difficult for you to do wudu at the time of the second prayer.

If it is not easy for you to do wudu or tayammum until the time for the prayer is nearly over, then you have to pray even if you did not purify yourself with either water or dust.

Evidence for the permissibility to pray without wudu or tayammum

The evidence that it is permissible for a man to pray even if he cannot purify himself is as follows:

It was narrated that `Aishah borrowed a necklace from ‘Asma and lost it. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent a man to find it, then the time for prayer came but they did not have any water, so they prayed then complained about that to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Then Allah revealed the verse of tayammum. Usayd ibn Hudayr said to A’ishah, “May Allah reward you with good, for by Allah there has never happened to you anything that you dislike but Allah brought something good for you and for the Muslims through it.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 329; Muslim, 367)

In a report narrated by al-Tabarani and Abu ‘Awwanah, it states clearly that they prayed without wudu.

`Aishah said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent Usayd ibn Hudayr and some others to look for a necklace that ‘Aishah had lost. The time for prayer came and they prayed without wudu. When they came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon

him) they complained to him about that, then the verse of tayammum was revealed." Al-Nufayli added: And Usayd ibn Hudayr said: "May Allah reward you with good, for by Allah there has never happened to you anything that you dislike but Allah granted relief for you and for the Muslims through it." (Narrated by Abu Awwanah, 873; al-Tabarani, 131)

This indicates that in the absence of water – which was the only means of purification before tayammum – it is permissible to pray without wudu, so it is more apt that it is permissible to pray in the absence of dust which is of a lower status than water.

From this it may be understood that the person who is unable to purify himself – whether that is because there is no means of purification or because he is unable to find it or is unable to use it if it is present – is permitted to pray without purifying himself.

Al-Bukhari included this hadith in a chapter entitled, Bab idha lam yajid ma-an wa la turaban (Chapter: if there is no water or dust).

Ibn Rashid said:

"It is as if the author is stating that tayammum is not prescribed if there is no dust, and that was after tayammum had been prescribed. It is as if he is saying that their ruling concerning the lack of the means of purification – which was water only – was the same as our ruling on cases when neither of the two means of purification, water and dust, is available. Hence we know that this hadith is suited to the heading, even though the hadith does not say that they had no dust, rather it says that they had no water. This indicates that prayer is obligatory for the one who has neither of the two means of purification, because the hadith shows that they prayed believing that it was obligatory to do so. If praying in such circumstances were not allowed, then the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would have told them off for doing so. This is the view of al-Shafi'i, Ahmad, the majority of muhaddithin and most of the companions of Malik." (Fath al-Bari, 1/440)

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

“If no dust is available, this is as if tayammum is not prescribed, and there is no difference. They prayed without doing tayammum because tayammum had not been prescribed at that time. The same applies to one who prays without tayammum because he does not have the material with which to do tayammum. What is the difference between not having it and it not being prescribed? According to analogy (qiyas) and the Sunnah, the one who does not have it should pray according to his circumstances, for Allah does not burden any soul beyond its scope. And he should not repeat the prayer, because he did what he was commanded to do so he does not have to repeat it. This is similar to the case of one who does not stand or face the qiblah or cover himself or recite because he is unable to do so. This is what is implied by the texts and by analogy.” (Hashiyat Ibn al-Qayyim ‘ala Tahdhib Sunan Abi Dawud, 1/61)

Ibn Qudamah said:

“Because it is one of the conditions of prayer which is waived when one is unable to do it, as is the case with all the other conditions and pillars (essential parts) of the prayer. And he did what he was obliged to do as best he could, so he does not have to repeat it. This is like the one who is unable to cover himself and prays naked; or one who is unable to face the qiblah so he prays facing a different direction; or one who is unable to stand so he prays sitting.” (Al-Mughni, 1/157)

Al-Shawkani said:

“With regard to the phrase “so they prayed without wudu”, a number of scholars, including the compiler, understood this to mean that it is obligatory to pray even if neither of the two means of purification, water and dust, is available. It does not say in the hadith that they had no dust, rather it says only that they had no water, but the lack of water at that time was like the lack of water and dust, because there was no means of purification other than water. The point is that they prayed believing it to be obligatory to do so. If prayer in such circumstances were not allowed, then the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would have told them off for doing so. This is the view of al-Shafi`i, Ahmad, the majority of muhadditheen and most of the companions of Malik.” (Nayl al-Awtar, 1/337)

This is what the scholars said about this issue, and it is the most correct view.

The ruling in your case is like that of one who cannot find water or dust, if you cannot find someone to do tayammum for you and you are unable to do it yourself.

And Allah knows best.