

Quitting Prayer – Disobedience and Schism

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ

“What has brought you into hell? They shall say: We were not of those who prayed”. (74:42-43)

The aim of worship is maintaining the prayer. It is the most obvious form of thanks and gratitude. It is the most ardent expression of faithfulness and trustworthiness, and the most personal declaration of one's servitude to Allah.

Adversely, giving up prayer is an explicit expression of abandonment. It reflects the disobedience of a lost, fumbling soul, and its separation from its principle and goal, the Great Creator.

This breach leaves dangerously negative and harmful repercussions on the human soul. Thus, the human soul that lives with the feeling of separation from Allah, incessantly seeks an alternative and leaves no stone unturned looking for calmness and bliss. It, however, searches in vain, wandering aimlessly about.

As a cautionary measure, Islam heartily emphasizes the necessity to keep up prayer, so that man will not bring on himself the misfortune of being distant from Allah:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

“Keep up the prayer and the middle prayer and stand up obedient to Allah”. (2:238)

Those who do not offer their prayers, Islam scolds them severely and deems giving up prayer and unbelief alike with regard to the final destiny after death.

With regard to their psychological condition and behaviour both states are far from Allah, and have no relationship whatsoever with Him. They both are ungrateful for His grace and blessings and consequently suffer greatly from the soul's darkness, living under the gravely tiresome a burden of

massive accumulation of sins and deviation. For this very reason, prayer in Islam is the separating edge between faith and infidelity.

Hear then what is related from the Prophet (S) which clearly expresses Islam's judgement of the one who does not sustain his prayer:

“Between infidelity and faith is merely giving up prayer”.

It is narrated from him that:

“Islam is based on five principles: bearing witness that ‘there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His servant and messenger, keeping up prayer, giving zakat (poor-rate), hajj (pilgrimage) to the house of Allah in Mecca, and fasting during the month of Ramadhan’.”¹

The Prophet (S) is also quoted as having said:

“Prayer is the pillar of religion, whoever keeps it up, he keeps religion, and whoever gives up his prayer he demolishes religion”.

From these quoted texts of Qur'an and Sunnah (the Prophet's tradition), which underline the sublime importance of prayer and its role in solidifying faith, we can see for ourselves the true value of prayer in Islam, which is literally the dividing line between faith and infidelity. Prayer is the badge of the faithful, the trait of the pious, the pillar of Islam and its soul, expressing its deep sense of obedience to Allah. In essence it is an intense, abbreviated expressing of ultimate obedience in the form of an excellent rite. In prayer all the characteristic objectives of Islam are manifest: faith in Allah, loyalty to Him, expressing gratitude, purifying the soul, training oneself to love the good, improving behaviour, continuing relationship with Allah, setting up a link with the Hereafter... etc.

Consequently, giving up prayer means destroying one's Islam, disconnecting the lifeline with Allah, and opening a gap through which deviation and corruption penetrate.

¹. Al-Kulaini, al-Kafi, Part 2, P. 28.

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