

The Ruling on Abandoning the Prayer

TAKEN FROM SHAYKH MUHAMMAD
IBN SÂLIH AL-'UTHAYMEEN'S WORK
"AS-SHARH AL-MUMTI' ALÂ ZÂD AL-MUSTAQNI"

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MUSTAQNI"²

قوله: «وَمَنْ جَحَدَ وَجُوبَهَا كَفَرَ»

His statement: "Whoever denies its obligation (the prayer) then he has disbelieved."

In other words, the obligatory prayer which is agreed upon, and they are the five daily prayers and the Friday prayer. If he denies their obligation then he is a disbeliever because he has rejected [the words of] Allah, His Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and the definitive Muslim consensus. Even if he prayed but completely or partially denied its obligation or denied a single unit of the prayer then he is a disbeliever. Likewise, if he were to deny a pillar of the prayer, upon which there is a scholarly consensus, then he is a disbeliever. The scholars make an exception to the general rule: someone who denies its obligation because he is new to Islam then he does not become a disbeliever. Rather, the truth is made clear to him, and if he still denies its obligation after having the truth made clear to him, only then is he a disbeliever. This exceptional case made by the scholars clarifies that no distinction is to be made between **religious matters which are definitive** and **religious matters**

¹ Translated by Abu Ameenah AbdurRahmān Bennett.

² **Translator's note:** This is a translated section from lessons given on a book called *Zād al-Mustaqni' fi Ikhtisār al-Muqni'* which was authored by the Hanbali scholar, **Abu an-Najā Musā Ibn Ahmed an-Najāwi**. This book of Hanbali fiqh is itself a summary of the classical work *al-Muqni'* which was authored by **Imam Mawaffaq ad-Deen Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn al-Quddāmah al-Maqdisi**. Two students of Shaykh Muhammad al-'Uthaymeen undertook the task of transcribing Shaykh 'Uthaymeen's lessons from cassettes. The transcription reached fifteen volumes with approximately five hundred pages in each volume. The Arabic text inserted in this paper is from Abu an-Najā an-Najāwi's work, and the English that follows is a rendition of Shaykh Muhammad al-Uthaymeen's highly beneficial explanation.

which are not definitive³ with regard to a person who may be excused due to ignorance. This matter, and I mean being excused due to ignorance, is important and it is part of the due process so that we do not excommunicate someone who has not had the evidence for his disbelief established against him.

قوله: «وكذا تاركها تهاونا، ودَعَاهُ إِمَامٌ أَوْ نَائِبُهُ فَأَصْرَّ وَضَاقَ
وَقْتُ الثَّانِيَةِ عَنْهَا» ،

And likewise, the one who abandons it out of neglect whilst the Muslim leader or his deputies have called him [to perform the prayer] but he persists upon what he is upon until the time is too short to do the second prayer.

This matter has been separated from the previous statement by the words “and likewise” because this part includes conditions. So if he abandons the prayer out of negligence and laziness whilst affirming its obligation then he is a disbeliever who has committed major disbelief and has left the fold of Islam.⁴ However, there are two conditions:

1. His statement “The Imam or his deputies have called him” meaning to establish the prayer. The intended meaning of ‘Imam’ here is the one who possesses the highest authority in the land.

³ **Translator’s note:** religious matters that are definitive refer to religious texts that are unequivocal in their meanings and are thus not open to interpretation. For example, Allah’s statement “**Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills**” is unequivocally clear in its prohibition of shirk. As for text that is not definitively clear then an example of this could be the verse “**Divorced women remain in waiting for three periods**” which carries more than one meaning amongst the scholars of Islam and thus it is not a definitive statement. The Shaykh here is essentially speaking about the excuse of ignorance which is a basic principle that the Shaykh adheres to. The Shaykh argues that if a person were not excused due to his ignorance, there would have been no benefit in Allah sending the Messengers. The Shaykh makes no distinction in applying the excuse of ignorance in cases of belief and action. As can be seen from the text attached to this footnote, the Shaykh makes no distinction between matters that are clear and matters that are hidden because they are subject to circumstance and environment. Thus, in such cases a person only becomes a disbeliever when the evidences are established against him and the impediments are removed. However, this is not to say that every appeal to ignorance is excused because ignorance could be a result of wilful negligence or an indifference towards learning the requirements of one’s religion. The Shaykh states in such cases that ignorance is not a valid excuse.

⁴ **Translator’s note:** Ibn Abdil Barr said, “The Muslims are unanimously agreed that the one who denies the obligation of the five daily prayers is a disbeliever. However, they did differ with regard to the one who affirms its obligation but deliberately chooses not to perform it when able to.”

2. His statement **“the time is too short to do the second prayer”** then in this case, he is a disbeliever. Hence, if he leaves a single prayer until its time has expired then he is not a disbeliever. It appears that the author is making no distinction between whether it joins to the second prayer or not. The view of Imam Ahmed, which is the popular view amongst his companions, is that a verdict of major disbelief cannot be passed on anyone until the Imam has called him [to perform the prayer] because we have not yet established that he left the prayer due to laziness. He could be excused because he believes he is excused, but if the Imam calls him [to prayer] and he persists in his state, we now know that he has no excuse.

As for making the second prayer a condition then this is because he might believe that it is permissible to combine between two prayers without a valid excuse, and because it is possible to think this way, we do not rule him to be a disbeliever.

However, without doubt, the correct view is the view that some of the companions subscribe to and it is the view that the Imam calling him is not a condition due to the clear evidences and the lack of evidence to stipulate this as a condition. Moreover, are we to apply this procedure of the Imam calling him back in all matters of excommunication? Indeed, it is possible to apply this condition in all cases and not just in the case of the one who leaves the prayer out of neglect and laziness. Therefore, either we use this as a condition in all cases or we do not use it at all due to a lack of evidence to warrant a discrepancy.

Some of the scholars state if a person abandons a single obligatory prayer then he is a disbeliever.⁵ Others from among the scholars stated that it must be two obligatory prayers, but others said that he has to abandon prayers that are connected.⁶ So based on this, if he leaves off the Fajr prayer until its time expires then he is a disbeliever, but if he leaves off the Zuhr prayer then he becomes a disbeliever when the time for the Asr prayer expires.

⁵ **Translator's note:** Ibn Hazm al-Andulusi in his work called *al-Muhallā* (2/15) stated that it was reported from 'Umar, AbdurRahman Ibn 'Awf, Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal, Abu Hurairah, Ibn Mas'ood and others from the companions that whoever intentionally leaves off a single obligatory prayer until its time has expired then he is a disbeliever and an apostate.

⁶ **Translator's note:** This would be in reference to Zuhr and Asr which can be joined with a valid excuse, with the same applying to Maghrib and 'Isha and thus the time for both is the same.

What appears to be the case, based the evidences, is that he does not become a disbeliever until he continually abandons the prayer in the sense that he has adjusted himself to the habit of not praying. So he does not pray the Zuhr, Asr, Maghrib, the ‘Ishā or Fajr then this is the one who is a disbeliever.⁷ So if he prays one or two the obligatory prayers then he is not a disbeliever because it cannot be truly said that he has abandoned the prayer. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said

بَيْنَ الرَّجُلِ وَبَيْنَ الشِّرْكِ وَالْكَفْرِ تَرْكُ الصَّلَاةِ

“Between a man and shirk and disbelief is abandoning the prayer.”⁸

He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) did not say **“abandoning a prayer”**. With regard to what was narrated from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) that he said,

وَلَا تَتْرُكْ صَلَاةً مَكْتُوبَةً مُتَعَمِّدًا فَمَنْ تَرَكَهَا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَقَدْ بَرَّتْ مِنْهُ الذِّمَّةُ

Do not abandon a prescribed prayer deliberately. Anyone who abandons it will forfeit Allah's protection,⁹

then there is some dispute with regard to its authenticity. The default principle is that a person’s Islam remains and we do not expel him from the fold of Islam unless we are certain because anything that is based on certainty can only be undone by certainty. So the default principle regarding this specific person is that he is a Muslim and thus we do not expel someone who is a Muslim for certain, unless we have specific evidence that requires him to be expelled from Islam.

Some scholars state that the person who abandons the prayer out of negligence is not a disbeliever. However, Imam Ahmed holds the view that the one who abandons the prayer out of laziness should be excommunicated and it is the preponderant view because of the evidences from (1) the Book of Allah, (2) the Sunnah of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), (3) the statements of the Salaf and (4) valid theoretical reflection.

⁷ **Translator’s note:** The Shaykh mentions in another place in this work that a person who abandons the prayer does not become a disbeliever until he fulfils two conditions: (1) he abandons the prayer outright and (2) his heart becomes tranquil and at ease with outright abandonment of the obligatory prayer.

⁸ Saheeh Muslim (1/153).

⁹ Shaykh al-Albāni graded this hadith as *hasan* (good) in Saheeh Sunnan Ibn Mājah.

With regard to the Book then Allah states regarding the polytheists,

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ ۖ

But if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, they are your brethren in faith.

[At Tawbah11]

So Allah stipulates in this verse for the ratification of religious brotherhood three conditions: **(1)** repentance from shirk, **(2)** keeping up the prayer and **(3)** paying the poor-rate. The verse implies that someone cannot be a brother in religion if he does not pray or give the poor-rate even if he were to repent from shirk. Brotherhood in Islam is not invalidated by acts of disobedience even if they are major acts. An example of this can be seen in the verse of *Qisas* (retaliatory punishments) wherein Allah states,

فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبَاعُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ۖ

But whoever overlooks from his brother anything, then there should be a suitable follow-up and payment to him with good conduct.

[Al Baqarah 178]

So Allah made the person killed a brother of the one who intentionally killed him. Likewise, this also applies to two groups of believers who wage war against each other, since Allah states

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۖ

The believers are but brothers, therefore make peace between your brothers.

[Al Hujurat 10]

So brotherhood, which is predicated on belief, was not negated here despite the fact that waging war against brothers is a major sin.

With regard to not paying the poor-rate then some of the scholars are forced to maintain their position by stating that he also is a disbeliever. This is one of the views reported from Imam Ahmed. However, this view is rejected due to what has been authentically narrated in Saheeh

Muslim concerning the one whom Allah gave silver and gold to but did not pay the poor-rate that

يُرَى سَبِيلُهُ إِمَّا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَإِمَّا إِلَى النَّارِ

“He would then see his path, leading either to Paradise or to the Fire.”

This shows that this person is not a disbeliever because if he were such, he would not find an avenue to Paradise.

With regard to the Sunnah, then the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said

بَيْنَ الرَّجُلِ وَبَيْنَ الشِّرْكِ وَالْكَفْرِ تَرْكُ الصَّلَاةِ

“Between a man and shirk and the disbelief is abandoning the prayer.”¹⁰

He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) also said,

الْعَهْدُ الَّذِي بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمُ الصَّلَاةُ فَمَنْ تَرَكَهَا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ

“The covenant that stands between us and them is the prayer. So whoever abandons it, he has disbelieved.”^{11,12}

¹⁰ Saheeh Muslim (1/154).

¹¹ Reported by Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nisā'i, Ibn Hibbān and al-Hākim.

¹² **Translator's note:** Another evidence that the Shaykh uses in a separate treatise on abandoning the prayer is the hadith of 'Awf ibn Mālik who reported that Allah's Messenger said,

The best of your rulers are those whom you love and who love you, who invoke God's blessings upon you and you invoke His blessings upon them. And the worst of your rulers are those whom you hate and who hate you and whom you curse and who curse you. It was asked, 'Shouldn't we overthrow them with the help of the sword?' He said: 'No, as long as they establish prayer among you.

The Shaykh states that in this hadith there is an evidence for opposing and fighting with the sword those in power if they do not establish the prayer. It is not permissible to contest those in power unless they make a blatant show of disbelief (major) for which we have a clear evidence from Allah as stated in the hadith of Ubādah ibn Sāmī:

The Prophet called us and we gave him the pledge of allegiance for Islam, and among the conditions on which he took the pledge from us, was that we were to listen and obey (the orders) both at the time when we were active and at the time when we were tired, and at our difficult time and at our ease and to be obedient to the ruler and give him his right even if he did not give us our right, and not to fight against him unless we noticed him having blatant disbelief for which we would have a clear proof with us from Allah.

The word **‘between’** necessitates a distinguishing factor between two things (Muslims and non-Muslims), and thus the first is distinguished by the prayer and the latter is distinguished by its absence.

The Prophet’s (صلى الله عليه وسلم) statement الكُفْر (the major disbelief) is connected to the definite article ال which denotes disbelief in the real sense of the word (i.e., major disbelief) and that this is disbelief in the literal sense and not the disbelief that is lesser than the major disbelief.¹³ Shaykh al-Islam ibn Taymiyyah pointed out in his book *Iqtidā Sirāt al-Mustaqeem* that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) never said كُفْر (indefinite form) as he did when he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said

ثَنَتَانِ فِي النَّاسِ هُمَا بِهِمْ **كُفْرٌ** الطُّعْنُ فِي النَّسَبِ وَالنِّيَاحَةُ عَلَى الْمَيِّتِ

Two (things) are found among men which are [minor] unbelief: slandering one's lineage and lamentation on the dead.

So when the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said **“Between a man and shirk and the disbelief”** then the intended meaning here is the absolute type of disbelief that expels a person from the fold of Islam.

¹³ **Translator’s note:** Shaykh Muhammad Nasir-ud-Dīn al-Albānī commented on the types of kufr,

Kufr is of two types: (1) kufr in actions (كفر عمل) and kufr in obstinacy and belief (كفر عناد واعتقاد)... And as for kufr in actions then this is divided into things that negate eemān (belief) and things that do not [necessarily] negate eemān. So prostrating before an idol, mocking the Qur’an, killing the prophets and reviling them are all cases that negate eemān. As for ruling by other than what Allah has revealed, abandoning the prayer then they are certainly cases of kufr in action.

Shaykh al-Albānī is of the view that the one who abandons the prayer out of laziness then he is not a disbeliever in the major sense of the word. Interestingly, the above quote from the Shaykh refutes the doubts of the likes of Abu Baseer at-Tartusi who alleges that Shaykh al-Albānī holds all types of kufr in actions as minor kufr. The above statement categorically refutes the baseless accusation. Furthermore, Shaykh al-Albānī is preceded in his understanding of kufr by Shaykh Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, who states,

And here we have another foundation and it is that kufr is of two types: (1) kufr of action and (2) kufr of denial and obstinacy. So kufr of denial is that he disbelieves in something that the Messenger was sent with from Allah, stubbornly denying something from Allah’s Names, His Attributes, His actions or His rulings. This is the type of kufr that completely negates eemān. With regard to kufr in actions then this is divided into things that negate eemān and things that do not negate eemān. So, prostrating to an idol, mocking the Qur’an, killing the prophets and reviling them are all matters that negate eemān. As for ruling by other than what Allah has revealed and abandoning the prayer then they are certainly cases of kufr in action.

With regard to the statements of the Companions then they number in the many. There are sixteen narrations from the Companions, including ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb. Abdullah ibn Shaqeeq, who was from the successors of the Prophet’s (صلى الله عليه وسلم) Companions, narrated a general ruling regarding the excommunication of the one who abandons the prayer. So he said,

لا يرون شيئاً من الأعمال تركه كفر غير الصلاة

They (the companions) did not view the abandonment of any action as [major] disbelief except for the prayer.¹⁴

For this reason, the well-known Imam, Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh reported a consensus. He said **“The people in the era of the Companions continued to say ‘The one who abandons the prayer is a disbeliever.’”**

With regard to theoretical reflection then it is said that no intelligent person who possesses in his heart an atom’s weight of faith can persist in abandoning the prayer, whilst being aware of its importance and the lofty place from whence it was made a duty [on Muslims to perform] fifty times a day and then its number was reduced.¹⁵ Purification [before offering this act of worship] is essential [for its acceptance], and it is also essential that a person wears his adornment in the prayer. So how then can a person say **“there is no god worthy of worship except Allah”** and then continue to abandon the prayer? Truly, a testimony of this magnitude demands that a person worship Allah with the greatest forms of worship. It is a requisite for a statement of truth to be followed by a statement of action. It is impossible for a person to hold something as true and then not act according to it; rather, in our estimation, he has lied. Why is it that we excommunicate a person according to the texts which affirms his excommunication, even though he says **“there is no god worthy of worship but Allah”**, but when it comes to his abandonment of the prayer, we

¹⁴ At-Tirmidhi (9/90).

¹⁵ **Translator’s note:** The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said **“Allah enjoined upon my ummah fifty prayers, and I came back until I passed by Moosa who said, ‘What has Allah enjoined upon your ummah?’ I said, ‘He has enjoined fifty prayers.’ He said, ‘Go back to your Lord, for your ummah will not be able to bear that.’ So I went back and He reduced it. Then I came back to Moosa and said, ‘He has reduced it.’ He said, ‘Go back to your Lord, for your ummah will not be able to bear that.’ So I went back and He reduced it further. Then I came back to Moosa and said, ‘He has reduced it further.’ He said, ‘Go back to your Lord, for your ummah will not be able to bear that.’ So I went back and He said, ‘(The prayers) are five but (the reward) is fifty.”** (Saheeh al-Bukhāri [8/10])

do not excommunicate him, in spite of the explicit text regarding his disbelief? This is nothing more than a double standard.

It is not possible to interpret the hadiths regarding excommunication to mean the one who abandons it out of denial because even if a person were to offer a perfect prayer but denied its obligation, he would still be a disbeliever. When it was said to Imam Ahmed regarding the Most High's statement

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا ٩٣

And whoever kills a believer intentionally...,
[An Nisā 93]

that this means the one who deemed it permissible to kill a Muslim, he said, **“Glorified be Allah! The one who deems it permissible to kill a Muslim then he is in the Fire, regardless of whether he kills someone or not!”** And this is just the same for this matter because if you interpret these hadiths (abandonment of the prayer out of denial) then you have distorted their meanings in two ways:

Firstly, you have not taken its wording on its apparent meaning, since the hadiths hinge on the abandonment of the prayer and not on denial of its obligation.

Secondly, you have rendered invalid what the evidences suggest, namely abandonment, because you have interpreted them to mean denial of its obligation.

The above way of thinking falls under **“adopting a belief and then gathering the evidences”**. However, the One who legally decides **disbelief** and **Islam** is Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.

The question that remains is **“Are there hadiths that contradict the hadiths that point to major disbelief?”**. Well, firstly we must understand the meaning of a **contradiction** before we claim a contradiction. And for this reason, we say **“Verify what you say before adorning what you say”**. So, is there a hadith or a verse that states, **“Whoever abandons the prayer is not a disbeliever.”**? If we had something along the lines of this wording then we would say that this is a [true] contradiction. However, this is not the case. The texts from the Book and the Sunnah which appear to contradict the evidences can be divided into five types:

The first type serves as no evidence at all. For instance, some of them (scholars) use as evidence the Most High's statement:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ^{٤٨}

Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills.

[An Nisā 48]

So they use Allah's statement مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ and argue that it includes the abandonment of the prayer and as a result he falls under the will of Allah (i.e., Allah will either forgive him or punish him), demonstrating that this is not a case of major disbelief. However, the rebuttal to this is that His words مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ mean **“what is less than that”** and they do not mean **“anything besides that”**. What verifies this is that the one who belies anything from Allah and His Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) then he is a disbeliever who has committed the unforgivable type of disbelief that does not constitute shirk. Let us say, for argument's sake, that the words مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ do mean **“anything besides that”** then this would still include texts that deal with cases of [major] disbelief besides shirk. The disbelief that expels a person from the religion falls under the type of sin that is unforgivable even though it does not constitute shirk.

This also includes all other narrations that speak with a measure of ambiguity; we are required to interpret their meanings in accordance with the evidences that are clear and contain no ambiguity. For example, we have the hadith from 'Ubādah ibn as-Sāmit:

خَمْسُ صَلَوَاتٍ افْتَرَضَهُنَّ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مَنْ أَحْسَنَ وَضُوءَهُنَّ وَصَلَّاهُنَّ لَوْفَتِهِنَّ وَأَتَمَّ رُكُوعَهُنَّ وَخُشُوعَهُنَّ كَانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَفْعَلْ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ إِنْ شَاءَ غَفَرَ لَهُ وَإِنْ شَاءَ عَذَّبَهُ
Allah, the Most High, has made five prayers obligatory. So he who performs his wudhu well and prays them in their correct time, perfecting their bowing and submissiveness then Allah has promised to forgive him. However, he who does not perform them [correctly] then He has no guarantee from Allah that He will forgive him. If He chooses, he will forgive Him, and if He chooses, He will punish him.¹⁶

¹⁶ Sunan Abu Dāwood (2/35).

One possible interpretation of this hadith is that he did not offer the prayers in this described manner, i.e., **perfecting their bowing and submissiveness**. Another possible interpretation is that he did not offer all five daily prayers. So, sometimes he prayed and other times he did not. Another meaning is that he did not offer any of the five daily prayers. So when a hadith has the potential to accommodate for all of these meanings, it is considered from the texts that contain ambiguity, and thus they should be interpreted according to the texts that are clear and free from ambiguity.

The second type are general hadith which are to be understood in light of the hadiths that point to the disbelief of the one who abandons the prayer. An example of this is his statement (صلى الله عليه وسلم),

مَنْ شَهِدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ النَّارَ

He who testifies that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, Allah would prohibit the fire for him.¹⁷

This hadith is just one of its wordings. The likes of this hadith has been narrated from Abu Hurairah,¹⁸ Ubādah ibn Sāmī¹⁹ and ‘Itbān ibn Mālīk²⁰ (رضي الله عنهم).

The third type are general hadiths which are shackled to the impossibility of abandoning the prayer. For example, the hadith of Mu’ādh

¹⁷ Saheeh Muslim (1/49).

¹⁸ The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, “**And whoever you meet outside this garden testifying that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah, being assured of it in his heart, give him the glad tidings that he will enter Jannah.**” (Saheeh Muslim 1/424)

¹⁹ The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, “**If anyone testifies that None has the right to be worshipped but Allah alone Who has no partners, and that Muhammad is His Slave and His Messenger, and that Jesus is Allah's Slave and His Messenger and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit created by Him, and that Paradise is true, and Hell is true, Allah will admit him into Paradise with the deeds which he had done even if those deeds were few.**” (Saheeh Bukhari 81/12)

²⁰ The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) “**Verily Allah has forbidden the Fire for one who says, ‘There is no god worthy of worship except Allah,’ thereby seeking Allah's pleasure.**” (Saheeh Bukhārī 5/332)

مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ يَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صِدْقًا مِنْ قَلْبِهِ إِلَّا حَرَّمَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّارِ

“There is none who testifies sincerely from his heart that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and Muhammad is his Messenger, except that Allah will prevent him from entering the Fire.”²¹

Binding the carrying out of the two testimonies to a purity of intention and an honest heart prevents a person from abandoning the prayer because there is no person who is honest and sincere to his testimony expect that it will cause him by necessity to perform the daily prayer. For indeed the prayer is the foundation of Islam and the bond between a slave and his Lord. Thus, if he were honest in his devotion to Allah then he would do whatever is necessary to reach his target and avoid any obstacles that come between him and Allah. Moreover, the one who truly bears witness from his heart that **none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and Muhammad is his Messenger**, this by necessity will cause him to perform the prayer purely for the sake of Allah, following the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) because this is from the inevitable consequences of this truthful testimony.

The fourth type are those hadith that are limited to situations wherein people are excused for leaving off the prayer, such as the hadith reported by Ibn Mājah on the authority of Hudthayfah ibn al-Yamān that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said

يَذْرُسُ الْإِسْلَامُ كَمَا يَذْرُسُ وَشْيُ الثَّوْبِ حَتَّى لَا يُدْرَى مَا صِيَامٌ وَلَا صَلَاةٌ وَلَا نُسُكٌ وَلَا صَدَقَةٌ وَلَيْسَرَى عَلَى كِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَرْ وَجَلٌ فِي لَيْلَةٍ فَلَا يَبْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْهُ آيَةٌ وَتَبْقَى طَوَائِفُ مِنَ النَّاسِ الشَّيْخُ الْكَبِيرُ وَالْعَجُوزُ يَقُولُونَ أَذْرَكْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَى هَذِهِ الْكَلِمَةِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ فَتَحْنُ نَقُولُهَا

“Islam will wear out as embroidery on a garment wears out, until no one will know what fasting, prayer, (pilgrimage) rites and charity are. The Book of Allah will be taken away at night, and not one verse of it will remain on earth. And there will be some people left, old men and old women, who will say: “We saw our fathers saying these words: ‘La ilaha illallah’ so we say them too.”

So Silah said to him (Hudthayfah), “How will ‘La ilaha illallah’ avail them when they do not know what is praying, fasting (pilgrimage) rites and charity?” So Hudthayfah turned away

²¹ Saheeh Bukhāri (3/70).

from him, and so he (Silah) repeated his question three times and each time Hudthayfah turned away from him until the third time. So he said to him on the third time, **“O Silah, it (the testimony of faith) will save them from the fire!”**

So these people who are saved from the fire due to their testimony of faith are excused for their leaving off the rituals of Islam because they had no knowledge of them and the little they did carry out was all they could carry out. The circumstance of these people is similar to those who died prior to the rituals of Islam becoming mandatory or before they were capable of performing them, such as a person who dies not too long after declaring his testimony of faith and was unable to put the rituals into practice. Another example is someone who accepts Islam whilst residing in the lands of disbelief but then dies before he can learn about the rituals of Islam.

The fifth type are the weak hadiths that present no opposition to the evidences that speak on the disbelief of the one abandons the prayer.

These evidences quoted by those who do not view the abandonment of prayer as [major] disbelief do not present any opposition to the evidences quoted by those who do view its abandonment as [major] disbelief. This is because the evidences quoted by these people are (a) no evidences at all (b) include descriptive elements that are difficult to reconcile with abandoning prayer (c) restricted to cases when someone is excused for leaving off the prayer (d) or are weak hadiths that present no opposition to the evidences that prove his [major] disbelief.
