

## WHAT IS THE GREATEST OBLIGATION IN ISLAM?

### –WORSHIPPING ALLĀH ALONE (TAWHĪD)

You may well ask, ***“What is wrong with you people that you're always talking about Tawhīd and making lengthy discussions regarding it? Why don't you focus upon the affair of the Muslims in these times? Can't you see how the Muslims are being oppressed around the world?! Do you not see that the greatest obligation today is to enter the political arena?!”***

**Our response:** *Tawhīd* is to single out Allāh alone with all types of worship, and it is the very foundation of this Religion. So giving *Tawhīd* importance is to give the foundation of Islām its importance. If we were to ponder upon the Qur'ān and what it contains of guidance, we find that it clarifies *Tawhīd* completely—so much so, there is not a chapter of the Qur'ān except that it mentions something from the aspects of *Tawhīd* and a clarification of that which opposes *Tawhīd*. So in these chapters of the Qur'ān we find information related to the Names and Attributes of Allāh, we find information related to the actions of Allāh and His Lordship, that He is the sole Creator, Sustainer, Provider and Controller of all of existence. In these chapters we find the command of Allāh to worship Him alone, without associating partners with Him in worship. Likewise we find the great danger in associating partners with Allāh in worship, and the stern forbiddence of directing worship to other than Him, that being the greatest of all sins. Additionally we find that Allāh commands with obedience to Him and His Messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ), and this is from the rights of *Tawhīd*. Allāh mentions the reward He has prepared for those who establish *Tawhīd*: the gardens of Paradise. And the punishment He has prepared for those who reject His worship and associate partners with Him in worship: the Hell-fire. So therefore the whole of the Qur'ān revolves around this fundamental issue of *Tawhīd*. If we look at the life of the Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ), we will find that he spent thirteen years of his prophet-hood in Makkah then ten years in Madīnah. The period that he was in Makkah, he spent it calling the people to the worship of Allāh and warning them from associating others in worship with Him. During this time there was no revelation obligating the Zakāt or Fasting, nor the Hajj, nor the Hijāb, nor the prescribed punishments, nor the rest of the obligations and

prohibitions, nor the rulings related to social interactions—all this was revealed after the migration to Madīnah. The notable exception being the Daily Prayers which were made obligatory shortly before the Messenger's migration to Madīnah. So one can clearly see the great importance that Allāh and his Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) gave to the call to *Tawhīd* and the call to the abandonment of worship of anything besides Allāh. And the reason for this emphasis upon *Tawhīd* is due to its great status in Islām. So once this *Tawhīd* was deeply rooted in the hearts of the believers, Allāh sent down the rest of the obligations such as the Five Prayers, Zakāt, Fasting, Hajj and the Islamic dress code. And this was because none of these outer acts of worship are accepted by Allāh unless they are established upon *Tawhīd*. For this *Tawhīd*, Allāh sent the Messengers (ﷺ), and each of them began their call with *Tawhīd* just as Allāh has stated, ***“We sent a Messenger to every nation, calling them to the worship of Allāh, and to abandon the worship of the false deities.”*** (An-Nahl: 32) And, ***“We did not send a Messenger before you, O Muhammad, except that We inspired them to say that none has the right to be worshipped except Me, so worship Me.”*** (Al-Anbiyā: 25). And every Prophet would say to his people, ***“O my people! Worship Allāh! You have nothing worthy of worship other than He.”*** (Al-A'rāf: 95). And the same can be said about those who follow the way of the Prophets, they too give *Tawhīd* the importance that it deserves and they begin their call with it. Indeed the purpose of our creation is rooted in the worship of Allāh, as He said, ***“I did not create the Jinn and mankind except that they worship me alone.”*** (Adh-Dhāriyāt: 56). So if one does not worship his Lord, the sole Creator, or he worships others alongside Him, then he has violated *Tawhīd*, and committed the gravest sin in the sight of Allāh. There is huge misunderstanding amongst many Muslims (and non-Muslims). They imagine that *Tawhīd* is merely to affirm and recognise that Allāh is the Creator, the Sustainer, Giver of life and death, and the Controller. They believe that anyone who affirms this and recognises this, has submitted himself to Allāh and is a believing Muslim. This false notion of limiting *Tawhīd* only to the Lordship of Allāh is in fact actively propagated by some Muslim sects. They do not recognise that the *Tawhīd* which Allāh requested from every one of His Prophets such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (ﷺ) was the *Tawhīd* of singling out Allāh alone with all worship. Even the idol-worshippers in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) affirmed that Allāh was

the Creator, Sustainer, Giver of life and death, yet they supplicated to other than Him. So the mere affirmation and recognition of one God did not benefit them. Allāh, the Most High, stated in that regard, ***“Say, O Prophet, to the idol-worshippers: Who provides for you from the sky and the earth? Who possesses the hearing and the sights and who gives life to the dead and who is it that gives death to the living and who controls the affairs? They will say: ‘It is Allāh.’ Say to them, ‘Will you not then be dutiful to Him?’”***. (Yūnus: 31). So the point of dispute between the Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) and the worshippers of idols and graves was not due to their denial that Allāh was the Lord and Creator, but because they refused to direct their worship to Allāh alone. They would share their worship between Allāh and their idols or the inhabitants of the graves. So this point has been overlooked by many contemporary Islamic sects who have instead focused upon other affairs of lesser importance. Some Muslims in these times incorrectly believe that calling upon the dead and asking them for rescue is not associating partners with Allāh in worship, because they do not hold that the dead ones created them! They think that as long as they believe this, they are not committing polytheism (*shirk*). They claim that these things that they call upon alongside Allāh, whether it be Prophets, Saints, *Pirs*, Angels and so on, are merely intercessors between them and Allāh. They state in their writings and lectures, ***“We only call upon the saints and the Prophets because they are mediators and intercessors between us and Allāh,”***—this was the very same claim of the idol-worshippers in the time of Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ). Allāh stated that the polytheists said about their idols, ***“We do not worship them, except that they bring us closer to Allāh in rank.”*** (Az-Zumar: 3). And Allāh, the Most High, said regarding the polytheists, ***“They worship others besides Allāh, those who cannot harm them nor benefit them, and they say, ‘They are our intercessors to Allāh.’”*** (Yūnus: 18). In these times we find Muslims falling into this most major of all sins, and they state, ***“Our calling upon the inhabitants of the graves and our connection with the dead and seeking their aid and assistance is not polytheism, rather it is a means of nearness to Allāh and we only seek from the inhabitants of the graves intercession, because they are Allāh's beloved ones. So they are nothing more than mediators. So this is not polytheism (shirk), since polytheism is to believe that there is another creator or sustainer besides Allāh.”*** We must understand that

this statement of theirs is the very statement of the polytheists of old as we find in the Qur'anic verses above. Another saying that we sometimes hear is, **"Just because we invoke the dead and seek assistance from them, does not mean we are worshipping them."** Then this statement of theirs is in opposition to the texts. Allāh, states, **"And the places of prayer are for Allāh alone, so do not invoke anyone along with Allāh."** (Al-Jinn: 18), and He said, **"And whoever invokes along with Allāh any other deity has no proof for that. And his reckoning will be with His Lord. Indeed the unbelievers will never prosper."** (Al-Mu'minūn: 117). So we are commanded to devote all acts of worship to Allāh (تبارك وتعالى) because He is the Creator, Sustainer, Giver of life and death, and He is the one who provides sustenance. Allāh stated, **"O mankind, worship your Lord who created you and all those that came before you so that you may attain piety. He who has made the earth a resting place for you and has made the sky a canopy. He sends down rain from the sky, and brings out with it crops and fruits from the earth as provision for you. So do not set up rivals with Allāh in worship whilst you know this."** (Al-Baqarah: 20-21). This verse appears very early on in the Qur'an and contains the first direct command to mankind. And this command addresses the whole of mankind to worship their Lord and Creator alone. This verse mentions some of the actions of Allāh and His sole Lordship, and it is these actions of our Lord that establish the reason as to why we must worship Him alone, without any partners. We are to worship Him and seek His aid, rescue, and refuge - we call upon Him alone, since those other deities that are called upon neither created us, nor sustain us nor send down the rain. So why should we call upon a Prophet for aid or intercession, when we can call upon the One who created him? Why call upon the pious inhabitants of the graves, or the Angels or the Jinn when we can call upon the One who created them? Indeed Allāh has commanded that we invoke none except Him, **"Your Lord says: Supplicate to Me and I will answer you. Indeed those who are too proud to worship Me will enter the Hellfire in disgrace."** (Ghāfir: 60). Allāh states in yet another place, **"And from His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and moon. So do not prostrate to the sun, nor to the moon, but prostrate to Allāh who created them, if you truly worship Him."** (Al-Fussilat: 37). This verse clarifies that the external actions of worship such as prostrating and bowing are the sole right of Allāh, and are not to be directed to the sun, moon, Angels,

Prophets, graves or to one's ancestors. The Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) specifically stated, **"Do not take my grave as a place of worship."** (Reported by Bukhārī and Muslim). Worship in Islām encompasses that which Allāh is pleased with and loves, from speech and action, whether hidden in the heart or external upon the tongue and limbs. We are commanded to direct all worship to Allāh. The Muslim, who is obligated to pray five times each day, states in every unit of his prayer, **"Only You, O Allāh, do we worship, and only Your aid do we seek."** (Al-Fātiḥah: 4), and the Prophet himself stated, **"Du'ā invocation is worship."** (Reported by Abu Dawūd in his *Sunan*). From worship is to have complete trust and reliance in Allāh, so Islām forbids reliance upon amulets and good-luck charms, superstitions and omens as all of these matters violate complete reliance and trust in Allāh. As Muslims we believe that Allāh is the controller of everything, and, **"No calamity befalls, except by the permission of Allāh, and whosoever believes in Allāh, He guides his heart. And Allāh is the All-Knower of everything."** (At-Taghābun: 11). The wearing of amulets was forbidden by the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in his saying, **"Whoever wears a charm has committed polytheism (shirk)."** (Authentically reported by Ahmad in *Al-Musnad*). And it is reported that the Companion of Allāh's Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), Hudhayfah (رضي الله عنه) saw a man wearing a string around his arm as a protection from fever, so he removed it and cut it up (Reported by Ibn Abī Hātim in his *Tafsīr*). So from that which we have mentioned above, we see it is not permissible for us to violate any of the rights that belong solely to Allāh. So for example it is not permissible for anyone to claim knowledge of the unseen or the future, and the Knower of the unseen is only Allāh, so it is not permissible to go to fortune-tellers or astrologers. The Prophet Muhammad stated, **"Whosoever visits a fortune-teller and believes in what he says, then he has disbelieved in that which was revealed to Muhammad."** (Authentically reported by Abu Dawūd). This is due to the saying of Allāh, **"With Allāh are the keys to the unseen and none knows the unseen except Him alone."** (Al-An'ām: 59) and, **"Verily, the knowledge of the Hour is with Allāh alone, He sends down the rain and knows that which is in the wombs. No person knows what he will earn tomorrow, and no person knows in which land he will die. Verily, Allāh is the All-Knower, All-Aware."** (Luqmān: 34)

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# Mankind's GREATEST NEED & The Gravest Of All Sins

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