154593 - A paraplegic is asking about the ruling on offering obligatory prayers in the car

the question

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has decreed that I should have a disability, and I rely on crunches to walk. I offer all my prayers at home except for Jumu‘ah prayer, when I go to the mosque because this mosque has an accessible entrance. I find it difficult to go to other mosques because they are not accessible to people with disabilities. My question is: is it permissible for me to offer obligatory prayers in the car when I am away from home and cannot enter the mosque because the stairs are too high?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The basic principle regarding all obligations and duties in Islam is that the individual is not obliged to do anything except what he is able to do. This is indicated by the verses in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Allah does not burden any soul with more than it can bear} [al-Baqarah 2:286]

{So fear Allah as much as you are able} [at-Taghaabun 64:16].

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There are many religious texts which indicate that what is enjoined is subject to being able to fulfil it, as the Prophet (blessings and of Allah be upon him) said to ‘Imraan ibn Husayn: “Pray standing, and if you cannot do that, then [pray] sitting, and if you cannot do that, then [pray] lying on your side.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari.

The Muslims are unanimously agreed that if the worshipper is not able to do some obligatory parts of the prayer – such as standing, reciting, bowing, prostrating, covering the ‘awrah, facing towards the qiblah and so on – then what he is unable to do is waived in his case, and he is only required to do that which, if he resolves to do it, he will be able to do it.

In fact, it should be understood that although the religious texts stipulate having the ability to comply with the commands and prohibitions, that does not mean that the individual should still comply if doing it will result in some harm. So if a person is able to do some religious duties, but it will cause him some harm, in that case he should be regarded as being like one who is not able to do that thing. This is applicable to many religious obligations, such as purifying oneself with water, fasting when sick, standing in prayer, and so on, in accordance with the words of Allah (interpretation of the meaning):

{Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship} [al-Baqarah 2:185]

{[Allah] has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty} [al-Hajj 22:78]

{Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you} [al-Maa’idah 5:6].

In *as-Saheeh* it is narrated from Anas that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “You have only been sent to make things easy and you have not been sent to make things difficult.”(*Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa* 8/438-439).

One example of how Islam makes things easy when there is clear hardship is that it is permissible to pray on one’s means of conveyance – whether it is a car or a mount – for one who cannot get out of it or get down from it except with great difficulty, and he fears that he will not find anyone to help him get back into it or onto it.

Ibn Nujaym al-Hanafi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If a person has some health issues, even if they are minor, and he is travelling, and he fears that if he gets down from his mount to pray, he will not be able to get back up onto it, then it is permissible for him to offer the obligatory prayers atop his mount. The same applies to a sick

person who is riding, if he is not able to dismount and cannot find someone to help him to do so. That is in contrast to the one who can find someone to help him dismount."(*Al-Bahr ar-Raa'iq* 2/122).

Al-Hattaab al-Maaliki (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The prayer offered by one who is riding a mount is invalid, unless he is riding because he is sick."(*Mawaahib al-Jaleel* 1/514).

Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Regarding one who is not able to dismount, such as one who fears hardship that is usually unbearable, or fears that he will lose his travelling companions, even if he will only suffer from feeling lonely, according to the general statements of the scholars on these issues, he may pray atop his mount, according to his situation. al-Qaadi said: And he does not have to repeat his prayer."(*Tuhfat al-Muhtaaj* 1/493).

The author of the commentary on *at-Tuhfah* mentioned the excuses that make it permissible to offer an obligatory prayer atop one's mount, as he said:

… or he needs someone to help him get back on his mount but he does not have a servant to help him, and there is no one who could help him, such as a friend; or even when there is someone to help it is still too difficult, to the point that it is unbearable. End quote.

Al-Bahooti al-Hanbali (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If the sick person fears that if he dismounts he will not be able to get back onto his mount, he may pray atop his mount, so as to ward off hardship and difficulty."(*Kashshaaf al-Qinaa'* 1/502).

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If we know that if this sick person gets out of the vehicle he will not be able to get back in because he has no one to help him, which may happen, then he may pray in the vehicle, because that is more difficult than any annoyance caused by rain."(*Ash-Sharh al-Mumti'* 4/347).

Conclusion: it is permissible for the sick person for whom it is difficult to get out of his car – such as one who is paraplegic, for example – to offer the obligatory prayers in his car, but that is on condition that he is not able to get out of the car then get back into it except with great difficulty that is unbearable.

He must face towards the qiblah, and if it is not possible for him to face towards the qiblah when he is in the car, then he should turn the car to face towards the qiblah, then pray in a manner that is easy for him.

And Allah knows best.