221480 - It is not a condition of fasting being valid that one should pray in congregation

the question

What is the ruling on the fast of someone who does not pray in congregation in the mosque, according to the scholars who say that it is obligatory to pray in congregation in the mosque, because the man who leads the people in prayer makes obvious mistakes in grammar and recitation when reciting al-Faatihah. In this situation, does this person have to do force his mother to pray in congregation with him at home, or even if he prays on his own at home, will the reward of praying in congregation be recorded for him, if this person is sad about not praying in the mosque?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is not one of the conditions of fasting being valid that one should always pray in congregation in the mosque, even according to those fuqaha' who say that it is obligatory to pray in congregation. Not one of them ever said that fasting is not valid unless one does that, or that the reward of fasting will be lost if a person prays by himself. The justice and generosity of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, are too great to allow a great good deed and act of worship such as fasting to be lost because of a shortcoming in another act of worship, namely prayer in congregation. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Surely! Allah wrongs not even of the weight of an atom (or a small ant), but if there is any good (done), He doubles it, and gives from Him a great reward"

[an-Nisa' 4:40]

"So whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant), shall see it.

And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant), shall see it”

[az-Zalzalah 99:7-8].

Our advice to the questioner is to notice what is mentioned in his question of extremism and going out of one’s way to make connections where there are none, which is blameworthy.

The first example is connecting the validity of the fast to praying in congregation. The ruling on that has been outlined above.

The second example is asking about forcing his mother to pray in congregation with her son. The Muslim should be well aware of the great rights that parents have before Allah, may He be exalted, and what the son is required to do of lowering the wing of humility to them, treating them kindly, speaking nicely to them, and being polite in his dealings with them. So how can these qualities be combined with forcing and compelling? Can anyone be forced to do any act of worship? Or can any act of worship be valid if one is compelled to do it? So how about if that compulsion is directed towards one’s mother, who is entitled to the greatest share of respect, honour and kindness?!

All of this leads us to advise you to think again about the reason why you have stopped praying in congregation in the mosque. Perhaps there is some flexibility in the matter of which you are not aware. Perhaps the Shaytaan has motivated you to go to extremes in forsaking the congregation because of what he has made you imagine of clear mistakes that render the imam’s Faatihah and prayer invalid. This is not a far-fetched notion, because the Shaytaan lies in wait for man and uses every means at his disposal to bar him from the path of Allah and encourage him to make things too difficult for himself in both religious and worldly affairs. So beware of falling prey easily to his whispers, and protect yourself by seeking knowledge and adopting a moderate approach.

Whatever the case, whoever takes measures to join the congregation, and is keen and strives to do so, and does not let anything deter him from that except a legitimate shar‘i excuse on which there is scholarly consensus, such as sickness and the like, we hope that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, will decree for him in full the reward of praying in congregation, as an honour from

Him, may He be glorified, as our Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) told us when he said: “If a person falls sick or travels, there will be recorded for him a reward like that of what he used to do when he was at home and was in good health.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2996).

Al-‘Allaamah as-Sa‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Deeds vary and the size of the reward depends on the extent of faith and sincerity in the doer’s heart, to the extent that the one who has a sincere intention – especially if it is followed by whatever he is able to do of good deeds – he will be like the one who does that deed. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“He who emigrates (from his home) in the Cause of Allah, will find on earth many dwelling places and plenty to live by. And whosoever leaves his home as an emigrant unto Allah and His Messenger, and death overtakes him, his reward is then surely incumbent upon Allah”

[an-Nisa’ 4:100].

And in as-Saheeh it is narrated in a marfoo‘ report: “If a person falls sick or travels, there will be recorded for him the reward of what he used to do when he was in good health and was at home.” “In Madinah there are people who you never travelled any distance or crossed any valley, but they were with you – that is, in their intentions, in their hearts and in their reward – but excuses prevented them from joining you.” If a person thinks of doing some good deed, then he is not able to do it, his eagerness and intention to do it will be recorded for him as one complete good deed.

End quote from Bahjat Quloob al-Abraar wa Qurrat ‘Uyoon al-Akhyaar (p. 16)

And Allah knows best.