223781 - Is kneeling in front of someone forbidden?

the question

I submitted question no. 223373 previously, about the ruling on kneeling to elders, and I was referred to an answer that mentions the permissibility of bowing to elders in Islam. But my question was specifically about the ruling on kneeling because there are some scholars in our area who say that kneeling in front of someone is different from bowing or prostrating. I hope that you can clarify the issue in a manner that will dispel confusion, so that I can tell my family about your fatw, in addition to others who are also concerned about this issue.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It is not permissible to kneel or bow or prostrate to anyone at all, no matter how old or great he is. The Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) disliked his Companions even to stand up for him if he passed by them or entered upon them, even though that was merely standing, with no kneeling, bowing or prostrating.

Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him) said: No person was dearer to them than the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), but if they saw him, they did not stand up for him, because they knew that he disliked that. Narrated by al-Bukhaari in his book al-Adab al-Mufrad (946); Ahmad (11895); at-Tirmidhi (2678_. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah (358).

The Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) warned the one who liked people to stand up for him that by doing so he deserved to enter Hell. He (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever likes that people should stand up for him, let him take his place in Hell.” Narrated by Abu Dawood (4552); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth as-

Saheehah (357).

Secondly:

With regard to bowing to another person, it is not allowed. One of the Companions asked the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): O Messenger of Allah, if one of us meets his brother or his friend, can he bow to him? He said: “No.” He said: Can he embrace him and kiss him? He said: “No.” He said: Can he shake his hand? He said: “Yes.” Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (2652); classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah (160).

With regard to the kneeling that is prohibited, that refers to when a person is standing, then when someone passes him or enters upon him, he kneels to him.

But if a group is sitting, and some of them rest on their knees, there is nothing wrong with that, and this is not the kind of kneeling that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade, so long as the person he is kneeling in front of is also sitting and is not standing, and the one who is kneeling is not doing that by way of veneration or showing excessive respect to the one with whom he is sitting.

Some of the Companions did that in front of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him):

In Saheeh al-Bukhaari (3611) it says: … until Abu Bakr felt sorry [for ‘Umar, after he had a disagreement with him and they both came to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to resolve the matter, and his expression showed displeasure with ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him)], and [Abu Bakr] knelt down and said: O Messenger of Allah, by Allah, I was more unjust to him (than he was to me)…

And it was narrated that Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah has slaves who are not Prophets and are not martyrs, but the martyrs and Prophets will envy them on the Day of Resurrection because of how close they will be to Allah, may He be exalted.” A Bedouin knelt up and said: O Messenger of

Allah, describe them to us. He said: “They are the best of people, who live as strangers among other tribes; they befriend one another for the sake of Allah and love one another for His sake. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, will set up thrones of light for them on the Day of Resurrection. When the people are afraid they do not fear. They are the close friends of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, on whom there will be no fear nor shall they grieve.”

Narrated by al-Haakim; he classed it as saheeh and adh-Dhahabi agreed with him. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah (3464).

Thirdly:

It is not correct to say that the fatwa on our website permits bowing to elders.

Please see the answers to questions no. 164865 and 133487.

And Allah knows best.