
Prayer behind a sinner

Article taken and slightly adapted from: alifta.gov.sa

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Question: What is the ruling on offering Salaah (Prayer) behind a sinner, such as a person who shaves his beard or smokes?

Shaykh Abdul-Azeez ibn Baaz (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)¹: Scholars differed on this issue: some held that Salaah behind a sinner is not valid for his weak religiosity and untrustworthiness while many scholars saw that it is valid. However, the rulers should not appoint sinners as Imaams (those who lead the congregational Prayers) while there are others to undertake this job. This is the right thing to do. This sinner is a Muslim and knows that Salaah is obligatory, so the Salaah of those behind him is valid. The supporting evidence on this is what was authentically established in the Saheeh (authentic) Hadeeth that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said about offering Salaah behind corrupt leaders, [**They will lead you in Salaah; if they offer it properly, the reward is for both of you; and if they offer it improperly, the reward is for you and the sin is for them.**] Other Hadeeths that stress the same meaning were also reported from him (peace be upon him). Some of the Sahaabah (Companions of the Prophet) offered Salaah behind Al-Hajjaj, who was one of the most corrupt people of his time. The Mu'mins (believers) should offer Salaah in congregation, even if the Imaam is a corrupt person. However, if they can offer Salaah behind a just Imaam, it will be better for their religion.

¹ (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him