

Calling upon other than Allah.

It has been the way of our beloved Prophet salallahu alaihi wassalam, his righteous companions and the Muslims to seek help from Allah alone. Whenever they were in need of something, they would turn to Allah and seek His help, His mercy, His protection and His guidance. But now it has become a common practice amongst Muslims to call upon others besides Allah for help. We will clarify the issue of calling upon other than Allah through the following five questions.

1. Is it true that the disbelievers to whom the Prophet salallahu alaihi wassalam was sent did not believe in Allah?

No, this is not true, the disbelievers of Mecca believed in Allah, as He, the Most High says: "And if you were to ask them who created them, they would surely say: Allah. So how is it that they are deluded" [Zukhruf: 87]

They also believed that Allah was the giver of life and death and the Giver of Sustenance [Yunus: 31], that Allah sends down the rain [Anakabut: 61], that Allah was the sole Protector [Mu'mininun: 89], and in times of severe distress, they would call upon Allah alone [Anakabut: 65]. So although they believed that Allah was the Lord of everything, this was not sufficient to enter them into Islam. This was because they rejected singling out Allah alone in worship.

2. The disbelievers worshipped idols. But I turn to the saints hoping for their intercession. How can you compare this to idol worship?

By calling upon your saints, asking them to intercede on your behalf, you've committed the exact same shirk of the disbelievers. In the following verse, Allah mentions their excuse for shirk: "**And those that have taken protectors besides Him (say): We only worship them to come closer to Allah**" [Zumar: 3]. And also the verse, "**And they say that these are our intercessors in front of Allah.**" [Yunus: 18]

In these two verses, Allah mentions that the reason the pagan Arabs called upon the idols was so that these idols could act as intermediaries between them and Allah. The pagan Arabs felt themselves too sinful to approach Allah directly, thus they would call upon out to intermediaries such as holy men, angels and saints, whom they believed were very close to Allah. These intermediaries occupied a high status with Allah, and according to them, their intercession would be accepted. So they called upon them, believing that Allah would accept the intercession of these 'holy' men, and grant their requests.

These polytheists would build structures over the graves of these holy men. Over time, these structures became idols that were worshipped besides Allah. They did not believe that these idols had any power in and of themselves, any power they had, was from Allah. They would direct acts of worship such as du'a, sacrifice and vows to these idols, (while still believing that Allah was all-powerful) and it was for this reason they were deemed polytheists.

An example of an idol of the polytheists was Al-Lat. This idol was a large structure with a special keeper assigned to it. Ibn Abbas stated: "Al-Lat was a person who would knead dough and produce sawiq (a sweet dish) for the (Haj) pilgrims" (Bukhari). After he died, they built a structure over his grave, and over time this structure became an idol that was worshipped alongside Allah.

Now fast forward to the Muslims of today. We have graves of prominent Muslims such as Abdul Qadir al Jilani, Mo'in Din Chisti, Tijani, Rifa'ai and others. These graves attract millions of Muslims who call upon the occupant of the grave, hoping that they will carry their request to Allah. For example: "O Abdul

Qadir al Jilani, Ask Allah to relieve my distress”, or even worse: “O Abdul Qadir al Jilani, help me”. Both are blatant shirk.

Like the pagan Arabs, the grave worshippers of our time affirm the powerful nature of Allah.

Like the pagan Arabs, the grave worshippers do not intend to direct their worship to these saints and prophets, but to reach Allah through them.

Like the pagan Arabs, the grave worshippers use the same excuse for their shirk; merely to get closer to Allah by going through these holy intermediaries. *Hence the ruling of shirk applies to both groups of people.*

This type of shirk - which is related to setting up intermediaries between man and Allah, and calling upon them, is, throughout history, the most widespread form of shirk. The cause of this shirk is due to exaggeration of the status of pious people. They raised the status of pious individuals above their actual status, and ended up worshipping them. Tawheed, on the other hand involves a direct relationship between man and Allah. Allah is not in need of any intermediaries to accept our worship.

3. But shirk is the worship of idols, and we don't worship idols

The people of the Prophet's (salallahu alaihi wa sallam) time had different objects of worship, and he did not differentiate between these different objects. Some people worshipped idols, others used to worship pious people, such as al-Lat, others worshipped prophets, such as Jesus, and others worshipped angels. He (salallahu alaihi wa sallam) did not distinguish between these different acts of shirk, as shirk is not dependant on who is worshipped besides Allah, rather it is dependent on the fact that other than Allah is being worshipped. Al-Shawkani said: "Shirk is to perform to other than Allah an act than should only be performed to Him, regardless of whether that object is called an idol, a wali, a saint or tomb."

4. What is the relationship between du'a and worship?

Du'a is a great act of worship. The Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa sallam) said, "Du' a is worship." He then recited the verse, "**Verily, your Lord has said: "Call upon me, and I will answer you!" Those who are too arrogant to worship Allah will enter Hell, humiliated!**" [Ahmed – Sahih]

Therefore, du'a is a type of worship; rather, it is among the greatest acts of worship, and one of the best ways to bring a worshipper closer to Allah. If du'a is a type of worship, then this automatically implies that making du'a to other than Allah is shirk. Therefore, any person who makes du'a to the deceased has committed major shirk. As for calling upon the living, then this permissible if the one you are calling upon is *present*, and *capable* of responding to your du'a. For example, calling upon a friend to help you with your studies is permissible, but to call upon a living person, asking him to make it rain, is shirk. Likewise calling upon one who is alive, but not present, seeking his help, is also shirk.

5. What other evidences are there to show that du'a is for Allah alone?

There are many evidences, from them the ayah: "**You alone we worship and you alone we ask for help**". Also Allah says: "**Say (O Muhammad) I make du'a only to my Lord and I associate none as partners with Him**" [Jinn: 72:20] and the verse: "**Then do not call upon anyone besides Allah**" [72:18]

The Prophet (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: "If you ask in prayer then ask only Allah, and if you seek help, seek it only from Allah" [Tirmidhee]. And he (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) also said: "Whoever dies while calling upon other than Allah, will be in the Fire of Hell." (Bukhâri).

These evidences also show that: *Calling upon other than Allah is futile.* Allah says: "**If you call out to them, they do not hear your call; and if they were to hear they would not respond to you and on the Day of Resurrection they will deny your shirk and none can inform you like Him Who informs.**"[35:14]

Allah describes that these objects of worship cannot even hear the call of those who call out to them. Hence you could call upon Ali radiyallah anhu or Abdul Qadir Jilani at the top of your voice, next to his grave, but Allah tells us that they do not hear our calls. So why call upon one who will never hear you. Furthermore, even if they could hear, they would not be able to do anything to help you, and finally on the Day of Judgement they will turn against the people who worshipped them.

Calling upon other than Allah, (e.g. a deceased saint or a Prophet) is major shirk. This is irrespective of whether you ask them directly for your needs, or you ask them to make du'a for you, or you ask them to intercede for you. Just look at the numerous du'as that come in the Qur'an or authentic hadith; all of them teach us to call upon Allah alone. Not a single du'a teaches us to call upon other than Allah. Hence the true Muslim follows the example of the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wassalam), and his righteous companions, calling upon Allah alone in all situations.