

Begin By Learning The Fundamentals Of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah

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Know, may Allaah grant you the ability to obey Him that I do not mean by "**Fundamentals**", the three categories of Tawheed only. Rather I intended that first, and secondly I meant by it, the other fundamentals, which Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah have agreed on and due to which they have separated themselves from the people of innovation and sects, such as the (the principles of):

Showing al-Walaa wal-Baraa (Loyalty and Disavowment), commanding the good and forbidding the evil, the (correct) stance towards the Sahaabah (Companions) – respecting and defending them, the position with respect to the Leaders, the stance with regard to the transgressors and sinners, and the position towards the People of Innovation – speaking against them and dealing with them.

This goes as well for all the other fundamentals that Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah have agreed upon and which they have put in their books on Creed, in order to clarify the truth and separate themselves from the people of deviation, calamities, vain desires and division – even though the source for some of these principles may be related to actions and not Creed.¹

So if you have gotten a firm grasp in understanding these points and fundamentals, then, by the Will of Allaah, you will be fortified against many of the misconceptions that are gushing throughout the Islamic world.

But when many of those who have repented become negligent in this matter and do not initiate their repentance by learning the fundamentals and methodology of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah, they become confused and lost with just the slightest of misconceptions! We ask Allaah to save and protect us!

Whoever reflects on the condition of these people, will find many instances and examples for this confusion and shakiness, amongst which are:

The First Example:

You find the person who has turned to the Way of the Salaf, in the beginning, strict and determined to keep far away from the people of innovation and sects. This lasts for some time, but then he is presented a misconception from one who clothes himself in the garb of Salafiyyah, which in brief is:

"Staying away from the people of innovation and not sitting or mixing with them is not correct."

"This causes many benefits to be missed out on."

¹ **Translator's Note:** An example of this point would be the inclusion of the issue of wiping over the socks for ablution. The source for this issue stems from action, yet many of the scholars of the past, including Ahmed bin Hanbal put it in their books on Creed, since by it they distinguished themselves from the people of desires and innovation, who rejected this aspect of the Sunnah based on it not conforming to their intellects.

“There is no one after Allaah’s Messenger (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) that is infallible. Even the Sahaabah made mistakes...”

And he does not hear these doubt-raising arguments except that you see his heart become diseased. And you see him drinking (from) this misconception faster than he drinks water. And lo and behold, thereafter, he begins to mix and associate with the people of innovation, becoming soft and easy-going with the principles of Salafiyyah, while doing this in the name of Salafiyyah!

This confusion only came about due to his failure to engage in learning the Qur’aan and the Sunnah, according to the understanding of the Salaf (Predecessors) of this Ummah. And it was due to his failure to study the Fundamentals of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah. This is since if he were to have devoted time to seeking of knowledge, he would have known that this misconception is false and at variance with the position of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah towards the people of desires and innovation, in the past and present.

And he would have known that the statement of this false-claimer (to Salafiyyah): “There is no one after Allaah’s Messenger that is infallible” and “everyone makes mistakes” are words of truth, but by which falsehood is intended. This is because when anyone amongst Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah – from the Sahaabah and those who followed after them in goodness – made an error, their error did not come as a result of following desires, or failing to follow the narrations or distorting the texts or chasing after what is unclear and ambiguous from these texts, as is the case with the people of innovation. Rather, their error would come due to one of them not being aware of the proof for it or his knowing about it yet not considering it to be authentic, or any of the other reasons for which they have an excuse.

The following saying of Allaah’s Messenger (sall-Allaahu `alayhi wa sallam) was revealed concerning them and concerning those who follow them in goodness:

“When the judge issues a ruling, making Ijtihad in the matter and is correct, he gets two rewards. And if he gives a ruling, making Ijtihad in the matter, and is mistaken, he gets (only) one reward.”²

This is contrary to the People of Innovation and Sects, since they do not have any concern for the narrations, and they give precedence to their intellects over the texts from the Book and the Sunnah! Rather, they establish principles that are in opposition to the principles of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah! So these kinds of people are not to be sought excuses for, as that false-claimer (to Salafiyyah) had made excuses for them. And no one includes them in the same row as that of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah except for someone who is ignorant or an arrogant innovator! Another example is:

The Second Example:

You find the person who has repented, in the beginning, enthusiastic and eager to criticize the people of innovation, but without any guidelines or knowledge. So he remains in this state for some period of time. Then he hears the misconceptions from those who claim to be upon Salafiyyah, saying that:

“Criticizing others is not from the way of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah!”

And that “It hardens the hearts!”³

² Reported by al-Bukhaaree & Muslim

And that "So and so person used to criticize the groups (*jamaa'aat*), but then he reverted (i.e. went back to his old ways) as a result of that!"

So these doubts are not presented to him except that he turns around in his heels, and begins to reject this grand principle (of criticizing), which the Religion is established upon. Rather, perhaps you may even find him, after that, calling the people to abandon this principle, claiming that it hardens the hearts!

The truth with regard to this matter is that Criticizing is a grand principle, which the pure Religion is established upon. It is a strong aspect in safeguarding the methodology of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah from distortions. And it is a magnificent form of worship and a noble way of seeking nearness to Allaah, which causes the Muslim's Eemaan to increase. However, this is only if it is implemented upon its proper conditions, such as having sincerity (i.e. not doing it except to please Allaah) and other conditions. So its state is the same as the state of any other act of worship, it increases one's Eemaan.

So the discrepancies are not in the principle, but rather they are in the person who implements this principle (of criticizing and refuting) without any (proper) guidelines. So when the misconception is met with acceptance in his heart, he finds fault with the principle (of criticizing) instead of finding fault in himself for his lack of applying the principle in a good manner.

This is why we see in the Imaams of guidance – from the Sahaabah, the Taabi'een, and those who followed them in goodness – abstinence (*zuhd*), dutifulness to Allaah (*taqwaa*), fear of Him (*khashya*) and a soft heart along with their excessive criticism and talk concerning individuals and groups.

Look at 'Abdullaah ibn al-Mubaarak and Ahmed bin Hanbal.

And look at Yahyaa bin Ma'een and 'Alee ibn al-Madeenee.

And look at Abu Haatim ar-Raazee and al-Bukhaaree.

The biographies of all of these scholars are filled with examples of their piety, fear and dutifulness to Allaah. So this confusion and instability is due to this repentant individual's lack of sincerity and honesty in repenting to Allaah. And it is due to his lack of giving attention to learning the principles of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah from the beginning.

Because of this, my repentant brother, you must beware of this kind of dangerous trap. And you must know that there is no way for you to be saved from these contagious misconceptions and these destructive traps unless Allaah grants you success (in that) and you begin by (first) learning the Fundamentals of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah. So be firm in this aspect, with earnestness and enthusiasm and strong determination, as Allaah says:

خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ

"Hold onto that which We have given you with might (i.e. determination)." [Al-Baqarah (2):63]

³ This is one of their outlandish claims! – Since the hardening of one's heart can only occur due to opposing the Commandments of Allaah and His Messenger, not by following them. How can the heart of a person who forbids the evil, especially innovations and deviant beliefs, become hardened?

And you must be truthful and have sincerity:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

“As for those who strive hard with regard to Us (i.e. Our Cause), We will surely guide them to Our Paths (i.e. Allaah's Religion). Verily, Allaah is with the good doers.” [Al-Ankabut (29):69]

And have certainty in the saying of Allaah:

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْ اقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَوْ
 أَخْرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مَا فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا
 يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيثًا ﴿١١﴾ وَإِذَا لَأْتَيْنَهُمْ
 مِنْ لَدُنَّا أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَهَدَيْنَهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا ﴿١٨﴾

“And if We had ordered them (saying): ‘Kill yourselves (i.e. the innocent ones kill the guilty ones)’ or ‘Leave your homes’, very few of them would have done it. But if they had done what they were told, it would have been better for them, and it would have strengthened their Faith (Eemaan). And indeed We would have then bestowed on them a great reward from Ourselves. And indeed We would have guided them to a Straight Way.” [An-Nisaa’ (4):66-68]

And beware of losing heart and being weak and of yielding to that which befalls you in the Way of Allaah (i.e. in your path to repentance). Do not forget Allaah’s saying:

فَمَا وَهَنُوا لِمَا أَصَابَهُمْ
 فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوا وَمَا أَسْتَكَاثُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

“But they never lost heart for that which befell them in Allaah's Way, nor did they weaken or degrade themselves. And Allaah loves the patient ones.” [Aali-Imraan (3):146]