

Every Innovation Is Misguidance: Even If The People Think It Is Good

Shaykh Saleem al-Hilaalee
al-Bid'ah wa Atharuhas-Sayyi'ah fil-Ummah (pp.22-36) [al-Istiqamah]

The people of knowledge, from the Companions, the taabi'een (their followers) and the Imaams of the Muslims who followed in their footsteps; whose excellence has been testified to, are all agreed upon the blameworthiness of bid'ah (innovations) and their evil, and that one should be free from innovations and those connected to it. There was no doubt about this from any of them, nor any withholding from that.

The following are some authentic sayings reported from them, as examples of their living and clear actions. If we take some examples from the level of the Companions, we find that which brings delight to the heart of one who seeks to follow his Messenger (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam), whilst also refuting the opinion of the innovators:-

Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood (radiyallaahu anhu) said,

"Follow and do not innovate, for you have been given that which is sufficient [and every innovation is misguidance.]"¹

Abdullaah Ibn 'Umar (radiyallaahu anhu) said,

"Every innovation is misguidance, even if the people consider it to be something good."²

If we also look at their actions we will see that they were in total agreement with their sayings:

Amr Ibn Salamah narrated:-

We used to sit at the door of 'Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood before the morning Prayer, so that when he would come out we would walk with him to the mosque. One day Aboo Moosaa al-Ash'aree came to us and said: Has Aboo 'Abdur-Rahmaan (i.e. Ibn Mas'ood) come out yet? We replied: No! So he sat down with us until he came out. When he came out we all stood along with him, so Aboo Moosaa said to him: O Aboo 'Abdur-Rahmaan! I have just seen something in the mosque which I deemed to be evil, but - and all praise is for Allaah - I did not see anything except good. Ibn Mas'ood inquired, "What did you see?" Aboo Moosaa replied: 'If you live, you too will see it. In the mosque I saw people sitting in circles awaiting the Prayer. In each circle they had pebbles in their hands and a man would say: repeat Allaahu Akbar (Allaah is greater) a hundred times. So they would repeat it a hundred times. Then he would say: repeat Laa ilaaha illallaah (There is none worthy of worship besides Allaah) a hundred times. So they would repeat it a hundred times. Then he would say: repeat Subhaanallaah (How free is Allaah from all imperfection) a hundred times. So they would say it

¹ Related by Wakee' in az-Zuhd (no. 315) and Aboo Khaythamah in Kitaabul-'Ilm (no. 54), where al- Albaanee authenticated it. The addition is related by at-Tabaraanee in al-Kabeer (9/154) and it is authentic

² Related by al-Bayhaqee in al-Madkhal ilas-Sunan (no. 191) and also Ibn Nasr in as-Sunnah (p. 24). Its isnaad (chain of narration) is as authentic as the sun!

a hundred times.’ Ibn Mas’ood then asked, “What did you say to them?” Aboo Moosaa said, ‘I did not say anything to them. Instead I waited to hear your view, or what you declared.’ Then we went along with him, until he came to one of these circles and stood up and said: “What is this I see you doing?” They replied, ‘O Aboo ‘Abdur-Rahmaan! These are pebbles upon which we are counting takbeer, tahleel and tasbeeh.’ He said to them, “Rather, count up your evil deeds. For I assure you that none of your good deeds will be lost. Woe be to you O Ummah of Muhammad (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam)! How quickly you head into destruction! These are the Companions of your Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) and who are widespread. There are his clothes which have not yet decayed, and his bowl which is unbroken. By Him in whose Hand is my soul! Either you are upon a religion better guided than the Religion of Muhammad (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam), or you are opening the doors of misguidance.” They said, ‘O Aboo ‘Abdur-Rahmaan! By Allaah! We only intend good.’ He said to them, “How many there are who intend good, but do not achieve it. Indeed Allaah’s Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said to us, “A people will recite the Qur’aan, but it will not pass beyond their throats.” By Allaah I do not know, but perhaps most of them are from you.” Then he left. ‘Amr Ibn Salamah said, ‘We saw most of those people fighting against us on the day of Nahrawaan, alongside the Khawaarij.’³

Many great principles are encompassed within this excellent narration, which are not known except to those who follow the Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam), those who do not put anything before Allaah and His Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam), but rather say, ‘We hear and we obey.

So from the principles are:-

Firstly:

That the One who prescribed the ends, did not forget to prescribe the means. So when Allaah prescribed For His servants the dhikr (remembrance of Allaah) He did not forget to prescribe the means and the way to do this. We find from the sunnah of Allaah’s Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) that he used to count the tasbeeh (glorification of Allaah) upon his right hand ⁴ and he said that they (i.e., the fingers) will be questioned and would speak.⁵

Secondly:

That al-bid’atul-idhaafiyyah is misguidance. And al-bid’ayul-idhaafiyyah is that type of innovation which is based upon a proof with regards to its foundation, but it has no proof with regards to the manner or the form. That is why it is called idhaafiyyah (something added on). And this type of innovation is, from one angle, directly against correct guidance, and from another angle, it is in agreement with it. So these people did not say something which is kufr (disbelief), nor did they do something which was in itself evil, rather they were remembering Allaah - and this is something which is prescribed by Revelation. However, the manner in which they performed this action went against the

³ Related by ad-Daarimee in his Sunan (1/79), at-Tabaraanee in al-Kabeer (9/126) and Aboo Nu’aym in Hilyatul-Awliyaa (4/381). It was authenticated by al-Haythamee in Majma’uz-Zawaa’id (1/181). See Appendix for Shaykh Saleem’s checking.

⁴ Saheeh: Related by Aboo Daawood in his Sunan (no. 1502), from ‘Abdullaah Ibn ‘Amr (ra). It was authenticated by al-Albaanee in Saheeh Sunan Abee Daawood (1/280).

⁵ Hasan: Related by Aboo Daawood in his Sunan (no.1501), from Yusayrah (ra). It was authenticated by Shaykh al-Albaanee in Saheeh Sunan Abee Daawood (1/280)

guidance laid down by Prophet Muhammad (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam), and so the Companions opposed them and told them to count this amongst their evil actions instead.

Thirdly:

Allaah - the Most Perfect, the Most High - is not to be worshipped, except by what He prescribes. So He is not to be worshipped according to desires, customs or innovations.

Fourthly:

That innovations kill off the Sunnah. This group of people innovated a new way of performing dhikr (remembering Allaah), which was not reported from Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam). So in doing this, they killed off the guidance of Muhammad (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam). And this is a principle which, the Salafus-Saalih (Pious Predecessors) understood well, and they knew for certain that innovations and the Sunnah cannot unite together.

Hassaan Ibn 'Atiyyah (d.120H) - rahimahullaah – said:

"No people introduce an innovation into their religion, except that its like from the Sunnah is ripped away from them." ⁶

Fifthly:

That innovations are the cause for destruction, since it leads to abandoning the Sunnah, and this causes tremendous misguidance.

The noble Companion 'Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood (radiyallaahu anhu) said:-

"If you were to abandon the Sunnah of your Prophet then you would go astray." [Muslim (5/156)]

So if the Ummah goes astray then it is destroyed. Therefore 'Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood said to that group: "O Ummah of Muhammad (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam)! How quickly you head into destruction." So reflected in the context of the above narration is the relevance of Ibn Mas'ood's understanding. Importantly Aboo Moosaa al-Ash'aree (radiyallaahu anhu) did not criticize them, rather he waited for the view or the order of 'Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood (radiyallaahu anhu). And this stance was not merely taken out of love or out of displaying false affection to Ibn Umm 'Abd (i.e. to Ibn Mas'ood). Rather, Aboo Moosaa was pleased for himself with what Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) was pleased with for his Ummah, since he (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said,

"I am pleased for my Ummah with what Ibn Umm 'Abd is pleased with for it." ⁷

Also in the narration is a proof that all of the Companions were agreed in opposing this action, since 'Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood (radiyallaahu anhu) used as a proof the fact that the Companions (radiyallaahu anhum) were wide spread (and therefore could easily be asked).

Sixthly:

⁶ Related by ad-Daarimee (1/45) and it is authentic.

⁷ Saheeh: Related by al-Haakim (3/317-318) and Ibn 'Asaakir in al-Majlis (no. 350). It was authenticated by al-Albaanee in as-Saheehah (no.1225).

Innovations quickly lead to kufr (disbelief). This is because the innovator has set himself up as one who is able to legislate and prescribe things; and thus set himself up as a partner to Allaah, adding things to the rulings laid down by Allaah, thinking that he is on a religion of better guidance than the Religion of Muhammad (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam).

Seventhly:

That innovations open the doors widely for disagreements to occur, and this is a door to misguidance. So whosoever lays down an evil way in Islaam, then he bears the sin of it and the sin of those who act upon it, until the Day of Judgement, without their sin being reduced by anything. And this is because the one who guides to an evil action is like the one who does it.

Eighthly:

Not giving importance to the matter of shunning innovations, leads to evil and sins. Do you not see that these people came to be amongst the ranks of the deviated group called the Khawaarij on the day of Nahrawaan, fighting against the Companions (radiyallaahu anhum), who were led by the Leader of the Believers 'Alee (radiyallaahu anhu), who cut-off this deviated group, on that memorable day.

Imaam al-Barbahaaree (d.329H) – (rahimahullaah) – said:

“Beware of small innovations, because they grow and become large.”

This was the case with every innovation introduced into this Ummah. It started as something small, bearing a resemblance to the truth, which is why those who entered into it were misled, and then were unable to leave it. So it grew and it became the religion which, they followed, so they deviated from the Straight Path and thus left Islaam. May Allaah have mercy upon you!

Examine carefully the speech of everyone you hear from, in your time particularly. So do not act in haste, nor enter into anything from it, until you ask and see: Did any of the Companions of the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) speak about it, or any of the (early) Scholars? So if you find a narration from them about it, cling to it and do not go beyond it for anything, nor give precedence to anything over it and thus fall into the Fire.⁸

Ninthly:

Righteous actions are only according to righteous intentions, and a good intention does not make something which is futile correct. This is because intentions alone cannot make an action correct, but rather complying with the Sharee'ah (Prescribed Laws) must be added to that.⁹

Finally:

Adding to something good is not good, because addition in good is evil, and this is something that is witnessed in everything. Thus, a matter, when it goes beyond its limits, changes to its opposite. So bravery, when it is added to, turns into rashness, and if it is decreased from, then it becomes cowardice. And generosity, if its limits are exceeded, then it becomes wastefulness, and if it is

⁸ Sharhus-Sunnah (no. 8)

⁹ Refer to Madaarijus-Saalikeen (1/85) of Ibn al-Qayyim

fallen short of, then it becomes miserliness. And thus the best of the affairs are the justly-balanced ones.

And 'Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood (radiyallaahu anhu) was not alone amongst the Companions in condemning innovations. 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Umar (radiyallaahu anhu), who was one of severest from the Companions in condemning innovations and abandoning the innovators, once heard a man sneezing and saying: - 'Praise be to Allaah and may the salaah and salaam (the praises of Allaah and blessings of peace) be upon Allaah's Messenger.' So he said to him, 'What is this? This is not what Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) taught us, rather he said,

“When one of you sneezes then let him praise Allaah.”

And he did not say: And also send salaah (blessings of peace) upon Allaah's Messenger.”¹⁰

Likewise was the practice of the taabi'een (those who met the Companions and clung to their way). So in this regard there is what is reported from Sa'eed Ibnul-Musayyib (d.90H) – (rahimahullaah) - that he saw a man praying after the appearance of dawn, more than two rak'ahs, making many rukoos (bowings) and sajdahs (prostrations), so he forbade him from this. The man said,

‘O Aboo Muhammad (i.e. Ibn al-Musayyib)! Will Allaah punish me for my Prayer?’ So he said, “No! But He will punish you for opposing the Sunnah (Prophetic guidance).”¹¹

And these narrations contain many good points of benefit, so from them:

[i] The Companions rebutting everyone who went against the authentic Sunnah, sometimes being very severe in their rebuttal, even if it was against their own fathers and sons.

[ii] That bid'ayut-tarkiyyah is misguidance: And this type of bid'ah (innovation) is one for which there is a proof to establish the action, except that the people deliberately leave the action, thinking that it is a part of the Religion, or something similar to it. For example, some of the Soofees who abandon marriage in order to emasculate themselves. The proof for this being misguidance is from Allaah - the Most High's - saying:-

“O you who Believe! Do not make haraam (unlawful) the good things that Allaah has made halaal (lawful) to you, and do not transgress. Indeed Allaah does not love the transgressors. And eat of the things that Allaah has provided for you, lawful and good, and have taqwaa (fear and obedience) of Allaah in Whom you believe.” [Al-Maa'idah (5):87-88]

So this aayah (verse) is concerned with a single meaning, which is: making forbidden that which Allaah has allowed from the good and pure things, and doing so as a matter of Religion. And Allaah has forbidden this, and considered it as going beyond the limits, since it is transgressing upon Allaah's right, in that He alone has the right to prescribe and legislate. And Allaah does not love those who transgress the limits. Then Allaah affirmed the allowance of these things with an even greater emphasis by His saying:

¹⁰ Related by at-Tirmidhee (no. 2738) and al-Mizzee in Tahdheebul-Kamaal (no. 552-553). The isnaad is good.

¹¹ Related by al-Bayhaqee is as-Sunanul-Kubraa (2/466) and the isnaad is authentic

“And eat of the things that Allaah has provided for you, lawful and good, and have taqwaa (fear and obedience) of Allaah in Whom you believe.”

[Al-Maa'idah (5):88]

Then he ordered them to have taqwaa (piety and obedience to Him). So this shows that the forbiddance of what Allaah has made lawful, in any form, is outside the bounds of taqwaa. Therefore, the Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said to those three men who came to the houses of the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam), asking about his worship and then on being informed about it, considered their own worship to be very little, so they said, 'What a great difference there is between us and the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam), whose previous and latter sins have been forgiven by Allaah.'

So one of them said, 'I will always Pray during the night.' The other one said, 'I will always fast during the day and not break my fast.' And the third of them said, 'I will keep away from women and never get married.' Then Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) came to them and said:

“Are you the people who said such and such? By Allaah! I am the one who is the most knowledgeable about Allaah amongst you, and the one who has the most taqwaa of Him, yet I fast and break my fast, I pray and I sleep, and I marry women. So whosoever turns away from my Sunnah (guidance) is not from me.”

[Al-Bukhaaree (9/104)] and [Muslim (9/175)]

So if the Companions (radiyallaahu anhu) left for us words of deep insight and which clearly enlighten the hearts, then men after them, who likewise attained the truth from this light, have also left for us words which are almost like the words of the Companions. And this is because they were those who very closely followed in the footsteps of the Companions - and the likes of their sayings have already preceded. However we add here a final example of their stance of truth:-

Thus, a man came to Imaam Maalik (d.179H) (rahimahullaah) and said,

'O Aboo 'Abdullaah! Where shall I enter the state of ihraam (the dress for one intending to do Pilgrimage)?' So Imaam Maalik replied, "From Dhul-Hulayfah, where Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) entered the state of ihraam." The man then said, 'But I wish to enter the state of ihraam at the mosque by his grave.' So Imaam Maalik said, "Do not do that, for I fear for you the fitnah (trial)." So the man said, 'What fitnah are you referring to, since it is only a few extra miles.' So Imaam Maalik said: "And what fitnah can be greater than for you to think that you have attained some virtue, which Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) fell short of.

Have you not heard the saying of Allaah:-

“Let those beware who oppose the command of the Prophet, lest they are afflicted with fitnah (trial), or lest they are afflicted with a painful punishment.” [An-Noor (24):63],

[Related by Imaam ash-Shaatibee in al-I'tisaam (1/132)]

APPENDIX:

Shaykh Saleem Al-Hilaalee's Checking Of The Narration of 'Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood in Regards to Subhah:

Shaykh Saleem al-Hilaalee said:

"It is related by ad-Daarimee in his Sunan (1/68-69) and by al-Bahshal in Taareekh Waasit (p. 198-199). It comes in two paths from 'Amr Ibn Yahyaa 'Amr and Ibn Salamah who said: I heard my father relating from his father...and he mentioned it. I say: this isnaad (chain of narrators) is saheeh (authentic), and its explanation follows below:

Firstly: 'Amr Ibn Yahyaa. He was mentioned by Ibn Abee Haatim in al-Jarh wat-Ta'deel (6/269) and by al-Bukhaaree in at-Taareekhul-Kabeer (6/372). Ibn Abee Haatim relates his tawtheeq (declaration of trustworthiness) from Ibn Ma'een. Ibn 'Adiyy mentions in al-Kaamil (5/1773), as does Ibn Hajar in Lisaanul-Meezaan (4/378), mentioning his leniency from Ibn Ma'een. I say: The tawtheeq here, takes precedence due to the following matters:

[1] Ibn Abee Haatim mentions him from Ibn Ma'een with a saheeh chain of narrators, whereas the jarh (disparagement) has not yet been confirmed through an authentic path.

[2] The jarh is not explicatory, so the tawtheeq (declaration of trustworthiness) takes precedence.

[3] He is mentioned by Ibn Hibbaan in ath-Thiqaat (8/480), and his tawtheeq is explicatory. Therefore, it is to be taken because it is the tawtheeq of an imaam from the imaams of al-jarh wat-ta'deel.

[4] Ibn Abee Haatim mentions that a group of trustworthy narrators narrates from him.

And due to this, 'Amr Ibn Yahyaa is trustworthy, and Allaah knows best.

And our Shaykh, may Allaah preserve him, in ar-Radd 'alat-Ta'aaqqubil-Hadeeth (p. 47) thought 'Amr Ibn Yahyaa to be Ibn 'Umaarah Ibn Abil-Hasan, so he authenticated the isnaad saying, "And its isnaad is saheeh, all of its men are trustworthy, they are the men that al-Bukhaaree accepted in his Saheeh, except for 'Umaarah, but he is thiqah (trustworthy)." And I am absolutely certain that he is 'Amr Ibn Yahyaa Ibn 'Amr Ibn Salamah and not 'Amr Ibn Yahyaa Ibn 'Umaarah, due to the following points:

[1] Bahshal clearly brings that in Taareekh Waasit.

[2] Shaykh ad-Daarimeeis al-Hakam Ibn Mubaarak and he is in the narration from 'Amr Ibn Yahyaa Ibn 'Amr Ibn Salamah, and not in the narration of 'Amr Ibn Yahyaa Ibn 'Umaarah, as occurs in Tahdheebul-Kamaal (7/132).

[3] That ad-Daarimee and Bahshal quote from the statement of 'Amr Ibn Salamah – and he is the narrator of the story: 'We saw the great majority of those people from the circles...'

And 'Amr Ibn Salamah is the grandson of 'Amr Ibn Yahyaa, and not the grandfather of 'Amr Ibn Yahyaa Ibn 'Umaarah. I say: Then it became clear to our Shaykh that there is doubt (wahm), so he returned from that in Silsilatus-Saheehah (5/12-13), so may Allaah reward him with goodness. Secondly, his father, Yahyaa Ibn 'Amr Ibn Salamah is mentioned by Ibn Abee Haatim in al-Jarh wat-Ta'deel (9/176) but he does not mention in it a jarh (disparagement) nor ta'deel (commendation). However, a group of trustworthy narrators reported from him.

Our Shaykh – may Allaah preserve him – said in as-Saheehah (5/12): "And that Shu'bah narrates from him is enough of a ta'deel for him. So he was selected by

those men who narrated from him, as is mentioned in his biography. And there was nothing to prevent him from being mentioned in ath-Thiqaat of Ibn Hibbaan. So indeed al-'Ijlee mentioned him in his Thiqaat saying: "A reliable (thiqah) Koofee." I say: his biography is not found in the published version of ath-Thiqaat. And he is not alone, rather, he is followed by Mujaalid Ibn Sa'eed from 'Amr Ibn Salamah. It is related by at-Tabaraanee in al-Mu'jamul-Kabeer (9/127). Al-Haythamee said in Majma'uz-Zawaa'id (1/181): "And it is Mujaalid Ibn Sa'eed and an-Nisaa'ee declared him thiqah, but he was declared weak by al-Bukhaaree, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and Yahyaa." I say: Rather, this is befitting of him.

Thirdly: His grandfather, 'Amr Ibn Salamah is reliable (thiqah). He was declared reliable by Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hibbaan and al-'Ijlee. So with this it becomes clear that this story has been authentically confirmed, and Allaah knows best. There are other paths that increase it in power upon power, and they are presented below:

[1] By way of 'Ataa' Ibn Saa'ib from Abil-Bukhtaree from Ibn Mas'ood. It was related by 'Abdullaah Ibn Ahmad in Zawaa'iduz-Zuhd (p. 428) and by Aboo Nu'aym in Hilyatul-Awliyaa' (4/380-381) and by way of him from at-Tabaraanee in al-Kabeer (9/125-126) and 'Abdur-Razzaaq in al-Musannaf (no. 5409). Al-Haythamee said in Majma'uz-Zawaa'id (1/181): "In it is 'Ataa' Ibn Saa'ib and he is reliable, however, he mixes things up."

I say: As for the mixing up (ikhtilaat) of 'Ataa' Ibn Saa'ib, then it occurred in the later stages of his life. So due to that, the scholars have divided between what he heard from him before the stage where he began to mix things up, and what he heard during his stage of mixing up. Indeed Hamaad Ibn Salamah narrated this story from him according to at-Tabaraanee in al-Kabeer (9/126), and he is from those who heard from him before his stage of mixing up, as occurs in al-Kawaakibun-Neeraat (p. 63). And with that, this problem is eliminated. As for the problem of inqitaa' (being cut off), then indeed Aboo 'Abdur-Rahmaan as-Sulamee follows Abal-Bukhtaree according to at-Tabaraanee in al-Kabeer (9/126), so this problem is also eliminated. So with that, this isnaad is confirmed and the praise – before and after – is for Allaah.

[2] By way of Sufyaan Ibn 'Uyaynah from Biyaan, from Qays Ibn Abee Haatim from him. It was related by 'Abdur-Razzaaq (no. 5408) and at-Tabaraanee in al-Kabeer (9/125) and it was authenticated by al-Haythamee in Majma'uz-Zawaa'id (1/181). I say: It is as he said, since its men are confirmed to be reliable.

[3] By way of Sufyaan from Salamah Ibn Kuhayl from Abee Zur'aa' from him. It was related by Aboo Nu'aym in al-Hilyah (4/381). I say: Aboo Zur'aaa' is

'Abdullaah Ibn Haanee' al-Akbar al-Koofee. And it is said about him that his ahaadeeth do not fall below the level of hasan. And the rest of its men are trustworthy, and the story has many paths, you will see them in al-Kabeer (9/128). And some of it was authenticated by al-Haythamee in Majma'uz-Zawaa'id (1/181), so refer to it."¹²

¹² al-Bid'ah (p. 44-47)