

Chapter 9:

بَابُ مَا جَاءَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ احْتَجَرَ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ صَاحِبِ الْبِدْعَةِ

Narrations Showing that That Allāh Withholds Repentance from the Person of Innovation

Shaikhul-Islām Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhāb (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated:

This has been reported from the ḥadīth of Anas (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ)¹, and from the *mursal* narrations of al-Ḥasan². Ibn Waḍḍāḥ³ mentioned from Ayyūb who said:

كَانَ عِنْدَنَا رَجُلٌ يَرَى رَأْيًا فَتَرَكَهُ فَأَتَيْتُ مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ سِيرِينَ فَقُلْتُ: أَشَعَرْتَ أَنَّ
فَلَانًا تَرَكَ رَأْيَهُ قَالَ: انْظُرْ إِلَى مَاذَا يَتَحَوَّلُ إِنَّ آخِرَ الْحَدِيثِ أَشَدُّ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَوَّلِهِ

¹ The ḥadīth wherein the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَجَرَ - أَوْ قَالَ حَجَبَ - التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ كُلِّ صَاحِبِ بَدْعَةٍ

“Indeed, Allāh withholds or screens, the repentance from every person of innovation.” Reported by aṭ-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awṣaṭ* (no. 4214; 5/113); al-Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Imān* (5/449, no. 7238); Ibn ‘Adiyy in *al-Kāmil fid-Du‘afā’* (6/257); and graded *sahīh* by al-Albānī in *as-Silsilatus-Sahīhah* (no. 1620) with a slightly different wording:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ احْتَجَرَ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ كُلِّ صَاحِبِ بَدْعَةٍ

See al-Albānī’s checking of *Kitāb as-Sunnah* of Ibn Abi ‘Āṣim (no. 37) and *Sahīh at-Tarḥīb wat-Tarhīb* (no. 54).

² Meaning al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110H رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ).

³ In his book *al-Bid‘ah wan-Nahyu ‘anhā* (no. 147)—it’s *isnād* is *sahīh*.

“There was a man among us who held an opinion, then he abandoned it. So, I went to Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn and said: ‘Are you aware that so-and-so has abandoned his opinion?’ He replied: ‘Look to what he turns to next. Indeed, the latter part of the ḥadīth is more severe upon them than its beginning:

يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ ثُمَّ لَا يَعُودُونَ إِلَيْهِ

‘They will pass out of Islām just as an arrow passes through the prey, then they will not return to it.’

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was asked about the meaning of this, so he said:

لَا يُوقَفُ لِلتَّوْبَةِ

‘He is not granted success in repentance.’”

Commentary⁴

The story Ibn Waḍḍāh mentioned in his book shows that an innovator does not repent—he does not abandon his bid‘ah for the Sunnah; instead, he just turns to another innovation in its place. For this reason, Muhammad Ibn Sīrīn (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ d. 110H) said:

انْظُرْ إِلَى مَاذَا يَتَحَوَّلُ

“Look to what he turns to next.” This is from the *fiqh* (i.e., understanding and insight) of Ibn Sīrīn. He did not expect him to repent from his bid‘ah—rather, he expected him to leave this bid‘ah for a bid‘ah more severe than it. And he used as proof the saying of Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) about the Khawārij:

يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ ثُمَّ لَا يَعُودُونَ إِلَيْهِ

⁴ Gathered by Abu Khadeejah.

‘They will pass out of Islām just as an arrow passes through the prey, then they will not return to it.’ This narration is from the proofs of his prophethood because what he stated happened.

When Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) was asked about the meaning of this, he said:

لَا يُوفَّقُ لِلتَّوْبَةِ

‘He is not granted success in repentance.’ That is because repentance is returning from innovations and abandoning them, but these innovators do not return.

Sufyān ath-Thawrī (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) d. 161H) said:

الْبِدْعَةُ أَحَبُّ إِلَىٰ إِبْلِيسَ مِنَ الْمَعْصِيَةِ الْمَعْصِيَةُ يُتَابُ مِنْهَا وَالْبِدْعَةُ لَا يُتَابُ مِنْهَا

“Innovation is more beloved to Iblīs than sin, because sin is repented from, whereas innovation is not repented from.” Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) d. 728H) explained this statement: “The innovator takes a religion which Allāh and His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) did not legislate. His evil deed has been beautified for him, so he sees it as something good. Thus, he does not repent so long as he sees it to be good. This is because the first step of repentance is knowledge that his action is evil, so that he may repent from it—or that he knows leaving it is good, and is commanded to do so—or that repenting from it and abandoning it is obligatory. However, as long as he sees his action as good, while it is in reality evil, then he will not repent.”

The intent of this chapter does not mean that if a person of innovation repents, his *tawbah* will not be accepted by Allāh. Indeed, Allāh accepts the *tawbah* even of an idol-worshipper who is worse in sin than an innovator. Rather, the meaning is that he is not granted success in making *tawbah* because he sees his *bid‘ah* as something good, and the

innovators (especially their leaders) remain stubborn in their misguidance. For this reason, you will not see throughout history many leading innovators repenting. Those who repent are few in number such as Abul-Hasan al-Ash‘arī, al-Juwaynī, Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī and Abu Hāmid al-Ghazzālī—these were from the *imāms* of *bid‘ah* and *ahlul-Kalām* (Speculative Theology), yet due to their acceptance of the truth alongside sincerity, they repented.

Shaikhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمته الله) explained by saying, “However, repentance of the innovator from *bid‘ah* is possible, and occurs whenever Allāh guides him and shows him the way until the truth becomes clear to him—just as Allāh guided those whom He guided from among the disbelievers, the hypocrites, and groups from the people of innovation and misguidance. This happens by following the truth that he comes to know.

So whoever acts upon the knowledge that he possesses, Allāh will grant him knowledge that he did not previously have, as Allāh (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) said:

وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَءَاتَيْنَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ ﴿٧٥﴾

‘While as for those who accept guidance, He increases their guidance and bestows on them their piety.’⁵

Likewise, whoever turns away from following the truth that he knows, and instead follows his desires, then that results in Allāh afflicting him with ignorance and misguidance until his heart is blinded from seeing the clear and apparent Truth, just as Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) said:

فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاعَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

⁵ Muhammad 47:17.

‘And when they deviated, Allāh caused their hearts to deviate. And Allāh does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.’⁶77

Al-Imām al-Albānī (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated: “This is because the innovator believes himself to be upon good, and therefore there is no hope for him to repent—just as Allāh said concerning those whose evil actions have been made to appear fair to them. Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) said:

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٣٦﴾ الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يُحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهم يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٣٧﴾

‘Say, [O Muḥammad]: Shall we inform you of the greatest losers as to their deeds? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought that they were acquiring good by their deeds.’⁸

Does the one who thinks that he is doing good repent? Does a person repent from what he believes to be good? This is inconceivable. For this reason, the scholars said that the danger of innovation upon its adherent is more severe than the danger of sin.

This is because the sinner knows that he is disobeying, so it is hoped that one day he will repent and return to his Lord. As for the innovator, the state of his tongue is as if he is saying, **‘My Lord, increase me; my Lord, increase me,’** while he believes that he is performing righteous deeds.

From here, we understand the ḥadīth that I referred to, namely his saying (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

إِنَّ اللَّهَ احْتَجَرَ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ كُلِّ صَاحِبِ بِدْعَةٍ

⁶ Aṣ-Ṣaff 61:5.

⁷ *At-Tuhfah al-‘Irāqīyah fil-A‘māl al-Qalbiyyah* (pp. 297-299).

⁸ Al-Kahf 18:103-104.

‘Indeed, Allāh has withheld repentance from every person of innovation.’

The withholding here is a universal (kawnī) withholding⁹, not a legislative (Shar‘ī) one¹⁰. Meaning: this person who proceeds upon the path of innovation—his action is made to appear good to him, so he does not repent. This, then, is the withholding, prevention, and barring of repentance from the person of innovation.

From this perspective, the scholars said that introducing innovations into the religion is more dangerous than committing sins, as I have explained to you.”¹¹

Commentary of al-Imām Ibn Bāz (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)

The intent of this chapter is to mention the dangers of *bid‘ah* and its tribulations—and refuge is sought with Allāh. From those dangers is that the person of *bid‘ah* is not granted the success of repentance from it. He sees what he’s doing to be correct, so he continues and persists in falsehood. Therefore, it is a must to warn against innovation in religion because it is a great evil. For this reason, the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) stated in an authentic narration:

مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا لَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرُنَا فَهُوَ رَدٌّ

⁹ Decreed by Allāh’s will, but not desired or liked by Him; nevertheless, He has decreed it due to His perfect wisdom and all-encompassing knowledge.

¹⁰ Legislative will: that which is liked or commanded by Allāh for His servants, though many of His servants may not carry it out. So, Allāh wants them to abandon innovations, and repent, but they will not do so, except for a small number.

¹¹ Audio: alathar.net/home/esound/index.php?op=codevi&coid=156231

“Whoever does a deed that is not from this affair of ours (Islam), it is rejected.”¹² And he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

وَشَرُّ الْأُمُورِ مُحَدَّثَاتُهَا وَكُلُّ بَدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ

“The worst of all affairs [in religion] are those newly introduced, and every innovation is misguidance.”¹³

From the matters wherein there is no difference between the scholars, without exception, is that all sins, if a person repents from them, then Allāh will accept his repentance¹⁴ due to His (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) saying:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ
الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥٣﴾

“Say, ‘O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. Indeed, Allāh forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.’”¹⁵

As-Safārīnī mentioned in his book *Lawāmi‘ al-Anwār* (1/400) that Imām Ahmad (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) was asked about the hadīth: “Indeed, Allāh withholds or screens, the repentance from every person of innovation.” So, he said: “The person of innovation is not granted success, nor ease in making *tawbah*.”

¹² Muslim (no. 1718).

¹³ Muslim (no. 867).

¹⁴ That even applies to the one who commits *shirk* as long as he abandons it, testifies to the Shahādah, and worships none besides Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) thereafter.

¹⁵ Az-Zumar 39:53.

I say: This is the explanation of what is mentioned in these narrations. This is the Sunnah of Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) for the one who strays from the Straight Path as a trial from Him and His Judgement according to His Wisdom and Justice, just as Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) stated:

فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

‘And when they deviated, Allāh caused their hearts to deviate. And Allāh does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.’¹⁶ And His saying:

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا ۗ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۖ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

“In their hearts is disease, so Allāh has increased their disease; and for them is a painful punishment because they [habitually] used to lie.”¹⁷ And His (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) saying:

وَنُقَلِّبُ أَفْعِدَّتَهُمْ وَأَبْصُرُهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ ۗ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَنَدْرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

“And We shall turn their hearts and their eyes away (from guidance), as they refused to believe therein for the first time, and We shall leave them in their trespass to wander blindly.”¹⁸ And His saying:

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الضَّلَالَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ مَدًّا ۗ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ

¹⁶ Aş-Şaff 61:5.

¹⁷ Al-Baqarah 2:10.

¹⁸ Al-An‘ām 6:110.

“Say, ‘Whoever is in error, let the Most Merciful extend for him some rope (time) until they see that which they were promised.’”¹⁹

And there are other similar verses.

Shaikhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said: “For this reason, a group of the Salaf—among them Sufyān ath-Thawrī—said: ‘Innovation is more beloved to Iblīs than sin because a sin can be repented from but an innovation is not repented from.’ So, this is the explanation of what was reported from a group of narrators who said: ‘Indeed Allāh has screened repentance from every person of innovation’, meaning that he does not repent from it because he considers himself to be upon the truth—but if he does repent, Allāh will forgive him just as Allāh forgives the unbeliever [when he enters Islam].

Whoever claims that there is absolutely no *tawbah* for the innovator is wrong and in clear error. And whoever says: ‘Allāh has not permitted repentance for the person of innovation,’ then its meaning is: so long as the innovator sees his innovation as something good, he will not repent from it. However, when Allāh shows him that what he is upon is ugly, then he repents from his innovation just as He (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) shows the unbeliever that he is upon misguidance. And it is known that there were many who were upon bid‘ah; and one would be shown his misguidance; he would repent, and Allāh accepts repentance and forgives. And none knows their number except Allāh.”²⁰

¹⁹ Maryam: 75.

²⁰ See *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* of Ibn Taymiyyah (11/684). This was read to Shaikh Ibn Bāz (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) on Monday afternoon, 9th Rabī‘ al-Awwal, 1418H, and penned by the reader.

Further Commentary of al-Imām Ibn Bāz

(رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)

This is the truth: indeed, Allāh screens *tawbah* from the person of *bid'ah* because he approves of it and makes allowance for it, and sees that he is correct—and for this reason, in most cases, they die upon innovation, and do not repent from it—and Allāh's refuge is sought—because he thinks he is right!

This is in contrast to the person who sins, who knows he is a sinner, or knows he is a criminal, and knows he is wrong. He will repent from his sins, and Allāh accepts his repentance. However, the person of innovation is in danger because he approves of innovation and follows his desires. So, he is in danger of being screened from repentance due to his approval of *bid'ah*—he thinks he is upon correct guidance, and he believes that, unless Allāh guides him and he makes *tawbah*. Then Allāh will accept his *tawbah*, and the same goes for the rest of the sins if a person repents for them, even *shirk*, which is greater in sin than *bid'ah*. Likewise is the case for the one who disbelieved in Allāh and repents from that—Allāh will forgive him. The disbelievers among Quraysh and others, when they repented, Allāh forgave them.

This was the case with the magicians of the Pharaoh, when they repented to Allāh, He accepted their repentance. Similarly is the case with the person of innovation: if Allāh casts light upon his vision and shows him the truth, and he repents from his *bid'ah*, Allāh will forgive him. So, the narration, **'Indeed, Allāh withholds or screens, the repentance from every person of innovation'** is a threat similar to the hadīth:

الْمَدِينَةُ حَرَمٌ فَمَنْ أَحْدَثَ فِيهَا حَدَثًا أَوْ آوَى مُحْدِثًا فَعَلَيْهِ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ
وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ لَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَدْلٌ وَلَا صَرْفٌ

“Madīnah is a sacred sanctuary, so whoever introduces an innovation therein, or gives protection to an innovator, upon him the curse of Allāh, the angels and that of all of mankind. Neither obligatory nor supererogatory acts will be accepted on the Day of Resurrection from him.”²¹

This is a threat from Allāh of punishment except for the one who repents, and Allāh will forgive him.

²¹ Al-Bukhārī (no. 1870) and Muslim (no. 1371), and the wording is from Muslim.