

FORTY HADĪTH IN CLARIFICATION OF THE MADHHAB OF THE SALAF—THAT IS THE MADHHAB OF AHLUL-HADĪTH

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8. Glad Tidings are for the Strangers Upon the *Sunnah*

‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) narrated that Allah’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

بَدَأَ الْإِسْلَامُ غَرِيبًا وَسَيَعُودُ كَمَا بَدَأَ غَرِيبًا فَطُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ قِيلَ مَنْ هُمْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ
قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُضْلِحُونَ إِذَا فَسَدَ النَّاسُ

“Islam began as something strange, and it will return just as it began as something strange, so glad tidings are for the Strangers.” It was said: “Who are they, O Allah’s Messenger?” He responded: “Those who rectify when the people cause corruption.”⁶¹

In the narration of ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا), he answered:

نَاسٌ صَالِحُونَ قَلِيلٌ فِي نَاسٍ سَوْءٍ كَثِيرٍ مَن يَعْصِيهِمْ أَكْثَرُ مِمَّنْ يُطِيعُهُمْ

“They are a few righteous people among a large body of wicked people—those who disobey them are more than those who obey them.”⁶²

In a narration from ‘Abdullāh (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ), the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was asked:

⁶¹ Muslim, no. 145, At-Tirmidhī, no. 2629, Ahmad in *al-Musnad*, no. 16690, Ibn Mājah, no. 3988, Abu ‘Amr Ad-Dānī in *Al-Fitan*, no. 228—and declared *saheeh* by Al-Albānī in *As-Saheehah*, no. 1273.

⁶² Ahmad, no. 6650, At-Tabarānī in *Al-Awsat*, no. 8986, declared authentic by Al-Albānī in *As-Saheehah*, no. 1619.

وَمِنَ الْغُرَبَاءِ

“And who are the Strangers?” He answered:

النَّزَّاعُ مِنَ الْقَبَائِلِ

“They are the few plucked from the various tribes.”⁶³

Explanation:

This affair of rectification is for the Strangers (*al-Ghurabā*) who rectify what the people have caused of corruption. *Al-Imām* ‘Abdul-‘Azīz Ibn Bāz (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ) stated:

“Islām began in Makkah as something small. Not many believed in it, and most of the people displayed enmity towards it, and they stubbornly rejected the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and caused him harm. They harmed his Companions (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ), those who had embraced Islām. Then he migrated to Madīnah, and so did his Companions along with him. Even there, they were strangers until their numbers swelled in Madīnah and in the rest of the lands. Then the people entered Islām in huge numbers after Allāh had opened Makkah to His Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and gave him victory. So, in the beginning, Islām was something strange among the people, and most of them disbelieved in Allāh, committed *shirk* (polytheism), and they worshipped the idols, the prophets, righteous men, trees, rocks and so on.

Then Allāh guided whom He guided at the hands of His Messenger Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and at the hands of his Companions (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ). So, people entered Islām, and they worshipped only Allāh. They abandoned the worship of idols, prophets, and righteous men.

They made their worship purely and sincerely for Allāh, worshipping none but Him alone. They would not pray except to Him, and they would not

⁶³ Ibn Mājah, no. 3988. Declared weak by Al-Albānī.

prostrate except to Him. They would not direct their supplications except to Allāh, nor seek deliverance except with Allāh, nor seek to be healed except by Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ). They would not ask the inhabitants of the graves for help or rescue, nor the idols, the trees, the rocks, the stars, the jinn or the angels. Rather, they worshipped none but Allāh alone (عَزَّوَجَلَّ). So, these are the Strangers. This is likewise the case at the end of time. They are the ones who remain steadfast upon the Religion of Allāh when the people fall behind in their Religion and disbelieve, or when their sins and evil deeds increase. Through all this, the Strangers remain upright upon obedience to Allāh and His Religion. For them is Paradise and happiness, a praiseworthy recompense in this world and the next.”⁶⁴

So, the Strangers are *Ahlul-Sunnah*, they are *Ahlul-Hadeeth* and the *Salafiyyoon* in every age, those who rectify the corrupt beliefs and ideas of the people. They clarify the truth to the people from falsehood and expose innovations and misguidance.

Imām Abu Bakr Al-Ājurri (d. 360 H رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said: “The saying of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), ‘Islam will return as something strange’, then its meaning, and Allah knows best, is that misguided desires will become numerous, and many people will go astray due to them—and the *Ahlul-Haqq* (the People of Truth) with remain and endure, those who are upon the Sharī’ah of Islam, and Strangers among the people. Have you not heard the saying of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), ‘My Ummah will divide into seventy-three sects—all of them will enter the Fire except for one.’ It was said, ‘Which one is saved (*nājiyah*)?’ He replied, ‘That which I and my Companions are upon today.’”⁶⁵

The Strangers call to Islam, to *Tawheed* and the correct ‘*Aqeedah*, they enjoin the good and forbid evil, and they nurture themselves, their families and

⁶⁴ See <https://binbaz.org.sa/fatwas/> no. 730.

⁶⁵ From his book *Sifatul-Ghurabā’ minal-Mu’mineen*, p. 27.

those around them upon the Sunnah of Allah’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). However, those who listen to them and follow the Truth are few, and those who oppose them are many, as the *hadeeth* mentions. This was the case even with many of the Prophets (عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ) as the Messenger of Allah (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **“The nations were presented to me, and I saw a Prophet with only a handful of followers, I saw another with one man or two men, and I saw a Prophet, and there was with him nobody...”**⁶⁶

Al-Hāfidh Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbalī (d. 795 H رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) stated in his description of the Strangers⁶⁷: “As for the trials of the misguided doubts and desires, then they are cause of the division of the Muslims—they split into factions, some of them accusing others of disbelief—so, they became enemies, sects and parties after they were once brothers, and their hearts were as if of one man. And no one is saved from these sects except the one saved sect, and they are mentioned in the saying of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

لَا تَزَالُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي ظَاهِرِينَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ مَنْ خَدَلَهُمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ
وَهُمْ كَذَلِكَ

‘There shall not cease to remain a group from my Ummah manifest upon the truth. They are not harmed by those who betray them nor by those who oppose them until the decree of Allah comes and they remain upon that.’⁶⁸ And at the end of time (close to the Hour), they are the *Ghurabā*² that have been mentioned in these *ahādeeth* who rectify the affairs when the people go astray. They are the ones who rectify the corruption against the Sunnah caused by people. They are the ones who flee with their Religion from the trials. They are the individuals plucked from the various tribes and they are small in number—there is not found in a whole tribe except one or

⁶⁶ Al-Bukhārī, no. 5705, Muslim, no. 220.

⁶⁷ *Kashul-Kurbah fi Wasfi Hāli Ahlul-Ghurbah*, pp. 23-29.

⁶⁸ Muslim, no. 1920.

two from them. And in some tribes, there is not to be found even one person, just as was the case with those who entered Islam in its beginning—and this is how the scholars explained this *hadeeth*.

Al-Imām Al-Awzā‘ī (d. 157 H رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said about the saying of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), ‘**Islam began as something strange, and it will return just as it began as something strange,**’ it is not that Islam will disappear, rather *AhluS-Sunnah* will disappear, so that there will not remain in the land from them except just one man.’

For this reason, there is to be found in the speech of the Salaf much extolling and praise of *AhluS-Sunnah*, describing them as Strangers (*Al-Ghurabā’*) and that they are few in number.

Al-Hasan Al-Basrī (d. 110 H) would say to his companions:

يا أهل السنة تَرَفَّقُوا رَحِمَكُمُ اللهُ فَإِنَّكُمْ مِنْ أَقَلِّ النَّاسِ

‘**O *AhluS-Sunnah* be gentle with each other, may Allah have mercy on you, for indeed you are the least in number of the people.**’

Yoonus Ibn ‘Ubaid (d. 139 H رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said, ‘**There is nothing that is strange about the Sunnah—but what is strange is a person who knows the Sunnah.**’

Sufyān Ath-Thawrī (d. 161 H رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said,

اسْتَوْصُوا بِأَهْلِ السُّنَّةِ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّهُمْ غُرَبَاءُ

‘**Treat *AhluS-Sunnah* with goodness for they are the Strangers.**’ The intent of these great scholars by the term *Sunnah* is the *Tareeqah* (Path) that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was upon, and his Companions, free from doubts and following desires...

Then, in the usage of many of the later scholars from the people of ḥadīth and others, the term ***Sunnah*** came to refer specifically to that which is free

from doubts in matters of creed. This is particularly so in the issues concerning belief in Allāh, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day; likewise in the matters of the Divine Decree (al-Qadar) and the virtues of the Companions.

For this reason, they authored works in this field under the title ***as-Sunnah***, because of the tremendous gravity of this affair — and because the one who opposes in these matters stands upon the brink of destruction.”