

Explanation of The Book of Tawheed

Class Notes – Chapter 4

بَابُ الْخَوْفِ مِنَ الشِّرْكِ

The fear of (falling into) shirk.

- **Relevance of the chapter to the book:** That after mentioning the obligations, virtues and how to perfect *tawheed* it was appropriate for the author to mention the fear of falling into its opposite (i.e. *shirk*). This so that the true believer can be cautious of it and fear falling into it.
- This chapter follows on from the previous (perfecting *tawheed*), because a believer could be easily deceived into thinking that they have perfected *tawheed* when in fact they have not.
- This is because the *nafs* is naturally inclined towards the *dunya* and could intend to do an act of worship for a worldly gain (status, wealth, praise etc.). This is a clear deficiency in sincerity which reduces the completeness of the obligatory *tawheed*.
- It is incumbent upon a believer to fear falling into *shirk*, because steadfastness is not guaranteed for anyone. This fear makes a believer alert to the danger of *shirk* and causes them to do everything to avoid it. Therefore, it is as if the chapter is titled: “*The obligation of fearing shirk*”.
- *Shirk* is of two categories:
 1. **Major shirk:** To wrongfully give the exclusive rights of Allah to other than Him in a manner necessitating the departure of the person from Islam.
 2. **Minor shirk:** To wrongfully give the exclusive rights of Allah to other than Him in a manner which does not necessitate the departure of a person from the fold of Islam.
- A believer is ordered to fear both categories of *shirk*. The fact one of them is classified as minor does not in any way imply that it is less evil than major *shirk*. The reason why minor *shirk* is classified as such is to indicate that its consequences are not the same as major *shirk*. That is, major *shirk* removes a person from the fold of Islam, while minor *shirk* does not.

وقول الله تعالى: ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾ [النساء: 48]

Allah the Almighty said: “Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills”.

- {لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ} – “Does not forgive association with Him.” Allah will not forgive a person who meets Him on the Day of Judgement having worshipped others besides Him.
- In saying this, if a person seeks forgiveness for the *shirk* they have committed before they die and rectify their deeds to reflect that, Allah will forgive them. Therefore, forgiveness is denied if a person dies upon a state of *shirk*.

- Does the *shirk* in this *ayah* refer to major *shirk* only, or is minor *shirk* also included? In other words, if a person meets Allah with minor *shirk* on the Day of Judgment, will Allah also not forgive it like major *shirk*, or is it in the category of major sins, where Allah may or may not choose to forgive them?
 - There is a difference of opinion amongst the scholars. However, one should remain fearful of falling into both types of *shirk*, because the consequences in both cases are severe - one being far severe than the other.
 - If it includes minor *shirk*, it implies that a person will be punished in the Hellfire regardless and that they do not fall under the *mashee'ah* (Will) of Allah. However, their abode in the Hellfire will not be eternal.
 - On the contrary, if it does not include minor *shirk* then it implies that it is under the *mashee'ah* of Allah – He may or may not choose to forgive it (like other sins).
- {وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ} – “But forgives what is less than it (*shirk*)”. Forgives what is below *shirk* from major and minor sins if a person did not seek repentance for them before they died.
- {لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ} – “For whom He wills”. For whomsoever He wills to forgive of His slaves for their sin. When He chooses to forgive, this is based on His bounty (فضل), and when He chooses not to forgive, this is based on His wisdom (حكمة) and justice (عدل).
- **General meaning of the ayah:** With the aim of warning His slaves against approaching any act of *shirk*, Allah emphasises that He will never forgive a person that commits *shirk* and dies upon it. On the contrary, out of His bounty and grace, He forgives all sins which are below the level of *shirk* to whom He wills.
- **Relevance of the ayah to the chapter:** The ayah shows that *shirk* is the greatest sin, because the one who dies upon it has no chance that Allah will forgive it (despite His great and expansive mercy). A sin this great necessitates that a person should fear falling into it.

وَقَالَ الْخَلِيلُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: ﴿وَاجْتَنِبِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ﴾ [إبراهيم: 35]

And Prophet Ibrahim said: “And keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols”.

- (الخليل) – The one who has reached the highest levels of love. This is referring to the Prophet Ibraheem whom Allah took as His *khaleel*.
- {وَاجْتَنِبِي وَبَنِيَّ} – “Keep me and my sons away”. From the word (جنب) meaning side. That is, put me and my progeny on one side and the idols on the opposite so that there is a great degree of separation between us.
- {الْأَصْنَامَ} – “Idols”. A sculpture in the shape of a man or animal which is worshiped besides Allah. As for the word (وثن) – it is anything which is worshipped besides Allah, whether it be animate or inanimate, tangible or otherwise. This word is more generic than (صنم).

« اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَجْعَلْ قَبْرِي وَثَنًا ، لَعَنَ اللَّهُ قَوْمًا اتَّخَذُوا قُبُورَ أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ مَسَاجِدَ »

O Allah, do not make my grave an object of worship (wathan), Allah has cursed people who take the graves of their prophets as places of worship. [Ahmad – Sahih]

- **General meaning of the ayah:** That the Prophet Ibraheem, the *khaleel* of Allah and Imam of the *hunafaa*, made a *du'aa* to His Lord to keep him and his sons far away from the worship of idols. This is because the worship of idols is a great *fitnah* which no one is guaranteed safety from.
- **Relevance of the ayah to the chapter:** That the Prophet Ibraheem, from his fear of falling into *shirk* made *du'aa* to Allah to save him and his progeny from falling into this great sin. If he is the Imaam of the *hunafaa*, then what about those below him?!

It is from the wisdom (*hikmah*) of Allah that he did not accept the *du'aa* of Ibrahim regarding some of his progeny. Just like the *du'aa* of the Prophet ﷺ was not accepted when he asked Allah not to make his *ummah* fight against itself.

وَفِي الْحَدِيثِ: أَخَوْفُ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ الشِّرْكَ الْأَصْغَرَ. فَسُئِلَ عَنْهُ فَقَالَ: الرِّيَاءُ.

It is narrated in the hadith that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: "What I fear most for you is the minor shirk." When asked about it, he said: "al-Riyaa' (showing off)."

- The *hadith* is narrated by Imam Ahmed in his Musnad. The hadith is graded as *hassan*. The *sahabi* of the *hadith* is Mahmoud ibn Labid.
- (أَخَوْفُ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ) – “What I fear most for you”. The thing I fear most from amongst all the things which can be feared. The Prophet ﷺ is addressing the believing Muslims because falling into minor *shirk* would diminish their existing *tawheed*. As for the *kaafir*, they do not have any *tawheed* to begin with.
- (الرِّيَاءُ) – To make your act of worship apparent with the intention of other people seeing it and praising you for it. *Riyaa'* can be divided into two categories:
 1. That the very essence of the act of worship is established upon *riyaa'* in which case the deed are categorially rejected.
 2. That the essence of the worship is sincerely for Allah, however during the act of worship *riyaa'* entered it. In this case there can be two outcomes:
 - a. They fight it and remove it – there is no harm in this.
 - b. They fail to remove it and it remains with them until the end of the act of worship. Their deed is categorially rejected.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** Out of pity and mercy for his *ummah*, there is no good except that the Prophet ﷺ led them to it, and no evil except that he warned them against it. From the evil that he warned against, is that a person shows off in their acts of worship to gain the praise of people. Despite this act being called minor *shirk* it is still severe in its effect, as it renders the deed that was being shown off as null and void. Since humans intuitively like being praised by others it may easily affect the believers, which is why the Prophet ﷺ feared it the most for them. In the case of major *shirk*, the reasons to commit it are not as subtle in the hearts of the true believers as they are for minor *shirk*, especially *riyaa'*.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** That there is a specific reference to fearing minor *shirk*. The previous two *ayaat* in the chapter are regarding the fear of major *shirk*. Therefore, the chapter is inclusive of fearing both types of *shirk*.

وَعَنْ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: مَنْ مَاتَ وَهُوَ يَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ نِدَاءً دَخَلَ النَّارَ.

رواه البخاري.

Ibn Mas'ud narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever dies while ascribing partners to Allah, enters the Hell-fire." (Bukhari)

- (يَدْعُوا) – Covers both types of *du'aa*, the *du'aa* of worship (دعاء العبادة) and the *du'aa* of asking (دعاء المسألة).
- (نِدَاءً) – A counterpart or resemblance.

- **General meaning of the hadith:** The Prophet ﷺ informs us that whoever makes a counterpart to Allah in worship (i.e. worshipping them besides Allah) and they remained upon that until they died, then they are doomed for the Hellfire.
- To take a counterpart (يُد) besides Allah in worship is of two types:
 1. To take them besides Allah in acts of worship (all of them or some of them). This is major *shirk* and the person who commits it is eternally in the Hellfire.
 2. Any act of minor *shirk*, such as making Allah equal to human beings in phrases such as “When Allah wills and you will”. This does not necessitate eternity in the Hellfire, although they may enter it temporarily.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** That after considering the grave consequences of the *mushrik* on the Day of Judgement (i.e. entry into Hellfire), a Muslim should greatly fear falling into *shirk* so that these consequences do not apply to them. Whatever necessitates entry into the Hellfire should be feared.

وَلِمُسْلِمٍ عَنِ جَابِرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: مَنْ لَقِيَ اللَّهَ لَا يُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَنْ لَقِيَهِ يُشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا دَخَلَ النَّارَ.

Muslim reports from Jabir that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: "Whoever meets Allah (on the Day of Judgement) not having associated anyone with Him in worship, shall enter Paradise; and whoever meets Him having committed shirk in any way will enter the Hell-fire."

- **Jabir:** ibn Abdullah. He was an Ansari and the son of a *sahabi*. He was one of the greatest *sahabah* and from the (مكثرون) – those who narrated many *ahaadith*. He died after the year 70 Hijri, aged 94.
- (مَنْ لَقِيَ اللَّهَ) – “Meets Allah”. Meaning to meet Allah after your death. This is like the previous hadith (مَنْ مَاتَ). This proves that you can repent from *shirk* while you are still alive.
- (لَا يُشْرِكُ بِهِ) – “Without associating partners with Him”. Does not take a partner besides Allah – neither in His Lordship, Worship or His Names and Attributes.
- (شَيْئًا) – “Anyone/anything”. Any form of *shirk* – both major and minor.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** The Prophet ﷺ informs us that whoever dies upon a state of *tawheed* will be admitted into Paradise. If they died upon a major sin and they were persistent upon it without repenting, they fall under Allah’s Will (*mashee’ah*), that is:
 1. He may forgive it; in which case they will enter Paradise initially.
 2. He may not forgive it; in which case they are punished in the Hellfire temporarily and will enter Paradise eventually.

If they died upon major *shirk*, the Mercy of Allah does not extend to them and they will abide in the Hellfire for eternity. As for dying upon minor *shirk*, there is difference of opinion as to whether they are under the *mashee’ah*. However, if they are made to enter the Hellfire, it is not for eternity.

- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** That whatever necessitates entry into the Hellfire (permanently or temporarily) should be feared. Just as you would fear falling into the fire of this world and would do everything to avoid it, the case should be stronger for the fire of the Hereafter.

- **Important issues of the Chapter**

1. **Fear of Shirk (polytheism).** As per the two *ayaat* in Surat al-Nisaa and Surat Ibrahim.
2. **Showing off (Riyaa) is a type of Shirk.** As per the *hadith* of Mahmoud ibn Labid where the Prophet ﷺ classified it as being *shirk*, albeit minor *shirk*.
3. **Showing off is a lesser type of Shirk.** As per the *hadith* of Mahmoud ibn Labid. Can it reach the level of major *shirk*? If all the acts of worship they do involve *riyaa'* then yes, otherwise no, even if *riyaa'* is present in the majority them.
4. **Falling into minor Shirk (Riyaa) is more fearful to the righteous and pious people than other matters (because of the ease, one can fall into it due to its being so subtle).** Because it may enter into the hearts of the believers without them realising (that's how subtle it is). Its subtleness is because of the inherent nature of humans to be praised.
5. **Nearness of Paradise and Hell.** Because the meeting with Allah is essentially when a person dies. Death can come at any time, making the Hellfire and Paradise close.
6. **Combination of the nearness of Paradise and Hell has been stated in the same Hadith.** As per the *hadith* of Jabir.
7. **Whoever meets Allah (on the Day of the Judgement) having associated nothing with Him, shall enter Paradise; and whoever dies while committing Shirk with Allah in any way shall enter Hell, even though he might have been a great worshipper.** As per the *hadith* of Jabir. If the *shirk* was major, they will enter the Hellfire for eternity. If it was minor, they will be punished in the Hellfire according to their sins, then they will eventually enter Paradise.
8. **The important issue of the invocation of Ibrahim for himself and his progeny, being the protection from worship of idols.** As per the *ayah* in Surat Ibrahim.
9. **The acknowledgement of Ibrahim of the condition of most people that "O my Lord, they have indeed led astray many among mankind."** That is, many people have been influenced by the worship of idols and fallen astray because of them. Therefore, Ibrahim feared for himself and for his progeny falling into *shirk* because of their great influence.
10. **An explanation of the meaning of the Kalimah "There is nothing deserving of worship in truth besides Allah" as reported by Al- Bukhari.** Because the chapter has evidences which establish the two pillars of the *shahadah* – namely affirmation (الإثبات) and negation (النفي).
11. **The superiority of one who is free from Shirk.** Because they are under the *mashee'ah* and may have their sins forgiven. They will enter Paradise regardless – either initially or eventually.