

Explanation of The Book of Tawheed

Class Notes – Chapter 17

بَابُ الشَّفَاعَةِ

The Intercession.

- **Relevance of the chapter to the book:** The polytheists attempt to justify what they are upon from *shirk* by acknowledging that those invoked besides Allah are from the creation, however, their high rank in the sight of Allah deems them worthy of seeking their intercession with Him.

In this chapter, the author refutes this false belief and establishes a counter argument against those who invoke the angels, prophets or righteous people, claiming that because of their high rank, they may be invoked and taken as legitimate intercessors before Allah.

- (الشَّفَاعَةُ) – “The intercession”. Linguistically, the verb *shafa’a* means to make something even. It is the opposite of *witr* (odd). Allah says:

﴿ وَالشَّفْعِ وَالْوَتْرِ ﴾

And [by] the even [number] and the odd. [al-Fajr: 3]

- In the *shari’* sense it is to intercede on behalf of someone before Allah to bring about good for them or to avert harm from them. For example:
 1. **To bring about good:** The *shafa’a* of the Prophet ﷺ for the people of Paradise to enter Paradise.
 2. **To avert harm:** The *shafa’a* of the Prophet ﷺ for those deserving the Hellfire not to enter it.
- As for the *shafa’a* amongst people in the matters which they have the capacity to fulfill, its rulings are mentioned in the books of *fiqh*.

وقول الله تعالى: ﴿ وَأَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يُحْشَرُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَايٌ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ

لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

Allah the Almighty said: And warn by it [i.e., the Qur’ān] those who fear that they will be gathered before their Lord - for them besides Him will be no protector and no intercessor - that they might become righteous. [al-An’am: 51]

- {وَأَنْذِرْ} – “And warn”. A warning is information which contains an element of fear so that the object of fear may be avoided.
- {بِهِ} – “By it”. That is, by the Quran. The Quran is a source of warning for the believers and drives them to take heed from the things Allah has warned against, such as The Day of Judgment or the Hellfire.
- {يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يُحْشَرُوا} – “They fear that they will be gathered”. The fact that they will be gathered is indisputable, however what they fear is the state they will be resurrected upon and the potential punishment on that Day because of their sins.

- {لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مَن دُونِهِ-وَلَيْ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ} – “There will neither be a protector nor an intercessor for them besides Him”. That is, when they are gathered, they will have no supporters to support them nor intercessors to intercede on their behalf. The *shafa’a* which is denied in the *ayah* is that which does not have the permission of Allah for either the intercessor or for the one receiving the intercession.
- **General meaning of the ayah:** Allah commands His Messenger ﷺ to use the Noble Quran to warn those who fear Allah and those who keep in mind the Day when they will stand before Him, lacking the support of a close relative or intercessor to intercede on their behalf without the permission of Allah. They may, therefore, be alert and do good deeds in this life in the hope that Allah will save them from the punishment of the Day of Resurrection.
- **Relevance of the ayah to chapter:** The *ayah* refutes the polytheists who seek the intercession of the prophets and righteous people, in that they have no right to the intercession except with Allah’s permission. If Allah alone grants the *shafa’a* then He alone should be worshipped – while those who have no right to the *shafa’a*, have no right to be worshipped.

وقول الله تعالى: ﴿قُلْ لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا﴾

Allah the Almighty said: Say: To Allah belongs the intercession entirely. [al-Zumar: 44]

- {لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ} – “To Allah belongs the intercession”. That is, it exclusively belongs to Allah. None of those whom you invoke can intercede before Him except with His permission.
- {جَمِيعًا} – “Entirely”. Indicative that the *shafa’a* on the Day of Judgment is of different types.

وقول الله تعالى: ﴿مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ﴾

Allah the Almighty said: Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission?

[al-Baqarah: 255]

- {مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي} – “Who is it that can...”. The purpose of the question is to refute. That is, none can intercede with Allah expect with His permission. If the refutation is in the context of a question, then it also carries the meaning of a challenge. That is, bring forth those intercessors who will intercede before Allah without His permission – if you have any!
- {عِنْدَهُ} – “With Him”. Allah is the Most High, above the Heavens on His Throne. This means that not even those who are closest to Him (the angels) can intercede expect with His permission.
- **General meaning of the two ayaat:** Allah orders the Prophet ﷺ to inform those attached to false deities for the sake of their intercession – that the intercession exclusively belongs to Allah and that none can intercede without His permission. In fact, none can utter a single word on the Day of Resurrection expect by Allah’s permission.

﴿لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ﴾

They will not speak except for one whom the Most Merciful permits. [al-Naba: 38]

- **Relevance of the two ayaat to the chapter:** The two *ayaat* jointly refute the polytheists who take intercessors from the creation, falsely believing that they have the power to intercede without the permission of Allah.

وقول الله تعالى: ﴿وَكَمْ مِّن مَّلَكٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ لَا تُعْنِي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا مَن بَعَدَ أَنْ يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ لِمَن

يَشَاءُ وَيَرْضَى﴾

Allah the Almighty said: And how many angels are there in the heavens whose intercession will not avail at all except [only] after Allah has permitted [it] to whom He wills and approves. [al-Najm: 26]

- {وَكَمْ مِّن مَّلَكٍ} – “And how many angels...” . A question which is indicative of a great number. That is, how great is the number of angels in the heavens, however their intercession is of no benefit expect if Allah permits it and approves of the one giving it.
- {فِي السَّمَوَاتِ} – “In the heavens”. There are angels in the heavens and on the earth, however Allah only mentions those specifically in the heavens closest to Him (such as Jibreel and the carriers of the throne). If these high-ranking angels cannot provide intercession except with Allah’s permission, then those lesser in rank are not more likely to provide it.
- {إِلَّا مَن بَعَدَ أَن يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَرْضَىٰ} – “Except after Allah has given permission for whom He will and pleases”. This *ayah* in Surat al-Najm mentions the two conditions of intercession.
 1. That Allah grants permission to the intercessor {أَن يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ}, and also to the one receiving it. Permission is extended only to those who are deserving.
 2. That Allah is pleased with the one whom He grants permission to intercede {وَيَرْضَىٰ}, and also to the one receiving it.
- This *ayah* in Surat al-Najm specifically demonstrates the falsity of the worship directed to al-Laat, al-‘Uzza and Manaat, and that they are incapable of being intercessors before Allah (see the context of the *ayaat* before this one). Therefore, if the angels who have a high rank in the heavens cannot intercede expect with Allah’s permission and approval, then al-Laat, al-‘Uzza and Manaat who are on the earth and worse in rank than the angels; have no right to be taken as intercessors.
- **General meaning of the ayah:** Allah informs us that despite the elevated rank of the angels in the sight of Allah, their intercession is of no avail, except if Allah grants them permission to intercede on behalf of those approved by Allah, whose deeds are free from acts of minor and major *shirk*.
- **Relevance of the ayah to the chapter:** That it refutes the polytheists who seek direct intercession in the angels and others from the creation. Such intercession constitutes *shirk* and will never be approved by Allah nor granted permission by Him.

وقول الله تعالى: ﴿ قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهَا مِن شَرْكٍ وَمَا لَهُ مِنْهُمْ مِّن ظَهِيرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَلَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَعَةُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا لِمَن أَذِنَ لَهُ ﴾

Allah the Almighty said: Say: Invoke those you claim as deities besides Allah. They do not possess an ants weight of ability in the heavens or on the earth, and they do not have therein any partnership with Him, nor is there for Him from among them any assistant. And intercession does not benefit with Him except for one whom He permits. [Saba: 22-23]

- {قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ} – “Say, call upon”. That is, call upon them in your *du’aa* or bring them forth.
- {زَعَمْتُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ} – “You claim to be associates besides Allah”. That is, you falsely claim that they are deities besides Allah who can benefit you or avert harm off you.
- {لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ} – “They possess not even the weight of a small ant”. That is, those invoked besides Allah are powerless to bring benefit or repel harm, even if such benefit or harm is equal in weight to a small ant.
- {وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهَا مِن شَرْكٍ} – “Nor have they a share in either”. That is, those who are invoked besides Allah, have no share with Allah in His Sovereignty over the Heavens and the Earth.

- {وَمَا لَهُ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ ظَهِيرٍ} – “Nor is there For Him any supporter from amongst them”. That is, Allah is far removed from needing these false deities to help and support Him in controlling and maintaining the affairs of the Heavens and the Earth.
- {وَلَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ} – “And intercession does not benefit with Him, except for the one whom He permits”. This refutes the polytheists who falsely claim that their false deities can intercede on their behalf.
- **General meaning of the two ayaat:** To prove the inability of the polytheists’ false deities, the Prophet ﷺ is commanded to challenge the polytheists by asking them to invoke their false deities which they claim bring them benefit and guard them against harm.
These false deities are no doubt incompetent and unable to respond to any invocation as they do not possess even an ant’s weight of power in the universe
They are also not partners with Allah in His sovereignty of the universe, nor do they assist Him in managing the affairs of the heavens and the earth.
They also do not have the ability to intercede on behalf of anyone except with His permission. A polytheist will never receive intercession. Therefore, the fallacy of worshipping those false deities in the hope they will intercede before Allah, is categorically destroyed.
- **Relevance of the two ayaat to the chapter:** That they clearly refute the polytheists, who seek to draw closer to their false deities, seeking their intercession with Allah and invoking them to bring about good or avert evil.

قَالَ أَبُو الْعَبَّاسِ: نَفَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا سِوَاهُ كُلِّ مَا يَتَعَلَّقُ بِهِ الْمُشْرِكُونَ، فَنفَى أَنْ يَكُونَ لغيرِهِ مُلْكٌ أَوْ قِسْطٌ مِنْهُ، أَوْ يَكُونَ عَوْنًا لِلَّهِ، وَلَمْ يَبْقَ إِلَّا الشَّفَاعَةُ، فَبَيَّنَ أَنَّهَا لَا تَنْفَعُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّبُّ، كَمَا قَالَ تَعَالَى: ﴿وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ ارْتَضَى﴾ [الأنبياء: 28].

فَهَذِهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ الَّتِي يَطْتَنُّهَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ هِيَ مُنْتَفِيَةٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، كَمَا نَفَاهَا الْقُرْآنُ وَأَخْبَرَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: أَنَّهُ يَأْتِي فَيَسْجُدُ لِرَبِّهِ وَيَحْمَدُهُ – لَا يَبْدَأُ بِالشَّفَاعَةِ أَوْلًا – ثُمَّ يُقَالُ لَهُ: ارْفَعْ رَأْسَكَ، وَقُلْ يَسْمَعُ، وَسَلْ تُعْطَى، وَاشْفَعْ تُشْفَعُ.

وَقَالَ أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ: مَنْ أَسْعَدَ النَّاسَ بِشَفَاعَتِكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: مَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ خَالِصًا مِنْ قَلْبِهِ. فَتِلْكَ الشَّفَاعَةُ لِأَهْلِ الْإِخْلَاصِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَكُونُ لِمَنْ أَشْرَكَ بِاللَّهِ.

وَحَقِيقَتُهُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ الَّذِي يَتَفَضَّلُ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْإِخْلَاصِ، فَيَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ بِوَاسِطَةِ دُعَاءِ مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ أَنْ يَشْفَعَ لِكُرْمِهِ وَيُنَالِ الْمَقَامَ الْمَحْمُودَ.

فَالشَّفَاعَةُ الَّتِي نَفَاهَا الْقُرْآنُ مَا كَانَ فِيهَا شِرْكٌ. وَلِهَذَا أَتَتْ الشَّفَاعَةَ بِإِذْنِهِ فِي مَوَاضِعَ. وَقَدْ بَيَّنَّ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ أَنَّهَا لَا تَكُونُ إِلَّا لِأَهْلِ التَّوْحِيدِ وَالْإِخْلَاصِ. انْتَهَى كَلَامُهُ.

Abul-Abbas said that Allah has equally negated all that the mushrikoon have attached (to their false gods). For He has negated that anyone has any dominion or any share of it besides Him, or that there is any assistant to Allah, And that there is nothing to remain except intercession. It is clear that there will be no benefit to anyone except for who has been granted permission by the Lord as He stated: They will not be able to intercede except for him with whom He is pleased. [al-Anbiya: 28]

And for this reason the intercession that the mushrikoon believe in is rejected on the Day of Resurrection, as it is rejected by the Qur'an and as the Prophet ﷺ informed us: He will come and prostrate to his Lord and praise Him, and he will not begin with intercession at first. It will be said afterwards: 'Raise your head, speak and it will be heard, ask and you will be given, intercede and intercession will be granted. [Bukhari, Muslim]

Abu Hurairah asked the Prophet ﷺ : 'Who will be the happiest of people with your intercession?' He ﷺ said: Whoever said La ilaha illa Allah sincerely with pure intention from his heart. [Bukhari] So this intercession is for those people with pure intent, if Allah so wills, and it will not be for those who commit shirk.

The essence of the matter is that it is Allah, who is above all imperfections, who favours the people sincere in their worship and forgives them through the medium of the invocation of whoever He has given permission to intercede as an honour to him and to confer upon him the Highest Place (Al-Maqam-al-Mahmud).

The intercession which is rejected and denied in the Qur'an is that which involves shirk, and this is why intercession is confirmed and affirmed by the permission of Allah in many places. The Prophet ﷺ made it clear that this intercession will not be for other than the people of tawheed and ikhlaas (sincerity in the religion of Islam).

- (أَبُو الْعَبَّاسِ) – Sheikhul Islam, Ahmad Ibn Abdul Haleem ibn Taymiyya. The famous scholar, renowned *imam* and prolific author. Abul Aabaas was his *kunya*, although he never married but instead devoted himself to knowledge and *jihad*. He died in the year 728 A.H and he was 67 years of age.
- (قِسْطٌ) – “Share”. That is the false deities which the polytheists worship have no share in Allah’s exclusive rights, with worship being the most important.
- (الشَّفَاعَةُ الَّتِي يَطْتَنُّهَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ) – “The intercession which the mushrikoon believe in”. That is, the one they seek besides Allah in their false deities.
- (وَاشْفَعْتُ نُسْفَعُ) – “Intercede and intercession will be granted”. That is the Prophet ﷺ will intercede only after he has been granted permission from Allah to do so.
- (خَالِصاً مِنْ قَلْبِهِ) – “Pure intention in his heart”. This excludes the hypocrites who utter the *shahadah* on their tongues, while their hearts are black with disbelief.
- (فَتِلْكَ الشَّفَاعَةُ لِأَهْلِ الْإِحْلَاصِ) – “So this intercession is for those with sincere intent”. That is, the polytheists will have no share in the intercession of those whom Allah has granted them permission to intercede.

﴿فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ﴾

So there will not benefit them the intercession of [any] intercessors. [al-Mudathir: 48]

- (الْمَقَامَ النَّمْحُودِ) – “The position of praiseworthiness”. The supreme position which will be granted to the Prophet ﷺ due to his intercession on behalf of the erring believers. He will be praised by all the creation because of his intercession.
- **Relevance of the author quoting the statement of Ibn Taymiyya:** The statement of Ibn Taymiyya further explains the Quranic verses mentioned in the chapter. The following points can be drawn from the explanation.
 1. A description of the intercession accepted by Allah and a description of the intercession rejected by Allah.
 2. The mention of *al-Maqam al-Mahmoud* and what the Prophet ﷺ must do in order to gain the permission of Allah to commence it.

3. The happiest and most fortunate people who deserve the intercession of the Prophet ﷺ are the believers.
- The Prophet ﷺ has six types of intercession on the Day of Judgement:
 1. The major intercession (*al-Maqaam al-Mahmoud*) on behalf of the believers on the Day of Resurrection. The Prophet ﷺ will intercede on their behalf so that Allah may relieve them from the suffering of the gathering on that Day.
 2. His intercession on behalf of those destined to enter Paradise by seeking Allah's permission to allow them to enter.
 3. His intercession on behalf of the sinners of the *muwahiddeen* who deserve to enter the Hellfire. Through his intercession they will be saved from entering it.
 4. His intercession on behalf of the sinners of the *muwahiddeen* who have already entered the Hellfire, that they be rescued from it.
 5. His intercession on behalf of some of the dwellers of Paradise that they be granted higher grades and ranks in Paradise.
 6. His specific intercession on behalf of his uncle Abu Talib to lessen his torment in the Hellfire.

- **Important issues of the Chapter**

1. **Explanation of the verses mentioned.** As explained above. They are five *ayaat*.
2. **Description of rejected intercession.** It is the one which contains *shirk*. Every intercession which contains *shirk* is rejected for both the intercessor and the one receiving it.
3. **Description of affirmed intercession.** It is the one exclusively for the people of *tawheed*, with the condition that Allah gives permission and is pleased with both the intercessor and the one receiving it.
4. **The "Greatest Intercession" being the "Highest Place" (of the Prophet ﷺ).** It is the intercession on behalf of the believers on the Day of Resurrection that that the hardships of the standing on that Day be expedited.
5. **A description of what the Prophet ﷺ will do on the Day of Judgement and that he will not begin by making intercession, rather he will prostrate and when he is given permission he will intercede.** As explained in the *hadith* mentioned by Ibn Taymiyya. This demonstrates the Greatness of Allah and the completeness of the Prophet's manners before Him.
6. **Who would be the happiest of people with the intercession of the Prophet ﷺ.** They are the ones who articulate the *shadaadah* with sincerity and fulfill all that it necessitates.
7. **Intercession will not at all be for whoever committed shirk.** Because Allah says:

﴿فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ﴾

So, there will not benefit them the intercession of [any] intercessors". [al-Mudathir: 48]

8. **Clarification of the real state of intercession.** Its reality is that it is Allah's favour upon the people of *tawheed*, whereby He forgives them through the medium of the invocation of the one He has given permission to honour him and confer upon him the *Maqaam al-Mahmoud*.