

Explanation of The Book of Tawheed

Class Notes – Chapter 19

بَابُ مَا جَاءَ أَنَّ سَبَبَ كُفْرِ بَنِي آدَمَ وَتَرْكِهِمْ دِينَهُمْ هُوَ الْعُلُوُّ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ

Excessive reverence of the righteous is the root cause of disbelief in mankind and their deviation from the true religion.

- **Relevance of the chapter to the book:** That the author makes clear one of the main causes of *shirk*, and that is *ghuluw*, or excessive reverence of the righteous. This is despite the clear evidences of the Quran and Sunnah which forbid such a thing.
- This is because the righteous have a high status with Allah, and subsequently in the eyes of the people. This status amongst people, accompanied with ignorance of the rulings concerning this issue, may cause them to exceed the rights of the righteous to something not legislated by the *sharee'ah*, thereby committing *shirk*.
- (الغلو) – “Excessive reverence”. To exceed the limits of praise (مدح) and veneration (تعظيم) prescribed in the *sharee'ah*, either through actions or sayings.
- (الصالحين) – “The righteous”. The ones who uphold the rights of Allah and the rights of the creation. It includes the messengers of Allah and those who follow them upon righteousness.

وقول الله تعالى: ﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ﴾

Allah the Almighty said: O People of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allah anything but the truth. [al-Nisaa: 171]

- {يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ} – “O People of the scripture”. Referring to the Jews and the Christians. They were given the *Tawrah* and the *Injeel* respectively.
- {لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ} – “Do not exceed the limits in your religion”. That is, do not transgress the limits set by Allah, whereby the limits of praise and veneration are exceeded regarding your Messengers that were sent by Allah. The Christians excessively revered Isa, while the Jews excessively revered Uzair, both claiming that they were the sons of Allah:

﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عِزْرُ بْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ﴾

“The Jews say: ‘Ezra is the son of Allah’ and the Christians say: ‘The Messiah is the son of Allah.’

That is their statement from their mouths ... [al-Tawbah:30]

- {وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ} – “Nor say anything of Allah except the truth”. That is, only say what Allah has described Himself with, that He is the One true deity, and that He is far removed from ever having a wife or children (as per Surat al-Ikhlaas).
- **General meaning of the ayah:** Allah forbids the Jews and the Christians from transgressing the limits He has set for them such that they do not elevate any of the creation to a status above that which

Allah has assigned them. They have been commanded not to ascribe any of the unique attributes of Allah to any of His creations, by not overly revering them.

- **Relevance of the ayah to the chapter:** Allah specifically forbids the Jews and the Christians from exceeding the limits (*ghuluw*) set by Allah in their religion. The context of the *ayah* shows that the excessiveness of the Christians was in their false claim that Isa was the son of Allah. As for the Jews, they claimed that Uzair was the son of Allah.

Although the *ayah* addresses the People of the Scripture, the warning is general and includes the *ummah* of the Prophet ﷺ. They too are also prohibited from excessively praising Allah's Prophets or the righteous amongst them.

فِي الصَّحِيحِ عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا فِي قَوْلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى: ﴿ وَقَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلَا سُوَاعًا وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا ﴾ قَالَ: هَذِهِ أَسْمَاءُ رِجَالٍ صَالِحِينَ مِنْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ ، فَلَمَّا هَلَكُوا أَوْحَى الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَى قَوْمِهِمْ: أَنْ أَنْصِبُوا إِلَى مَجَالِسِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا يَجْلِسُونَ فِيهَا أَنْصَابًا وَسَمُّوْهَا بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ ، فَفَعَلُوا وَلَمْ تُعْبَدْ ، حَتَّى إِذَا هَلَكَ أَوْلِيَاكَ وَنُسِيَ الْعِلْمُ ، عُبِدَتْ .

وَقَالَ ابْنُ الْقَيِّمِ: قَالَ غَيْرُ وَاحِدٍ مِنَ السَّلَفِ: لَمَّا مَاتُوا عَكَّفُوا عَلَى قُبُورِهِمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرُوا تَمَاتِيلَهُمْ ثُمَّ طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَعَبَدُوهُمْ .

In the Sahih, Ibn Abbas commented on the verse: "And they have said: You shall not leave your gods, nor shall you leave Wadd nor Suwa` nor Yaghuth nor Ya'uuq nor Nasr." [71:23]

He said: 'These are the names of some righteous persons from Noah's (Nuh) people. When they passed away, Shaytaan inspired their people to set up statues in their honour and set them in their gathering places, and to give these statues the names of those departed. They did this but did not worship them until these people passed away and knowledge of their origins were forgotten, then they were worshipped.' [Bukhari]

Ibnul Qayim said: 'Most of our predecessors have stated that after the death of the righteous persons, they confined at their graves then they made statues of them and after much time passed they started worshipping them.'

- {لَا تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ} – "You shall not leave your gods". Continue worshipping your false deities and do not abandon their worship. It also carries the meaning of support your deities and do not let others insult them.
- (فَلَمَّا هَلَكُوا) – "When they died". When the righteous men of the people of Nuh (Wadd, Suwaa', Yaghuth, Ya'ouq, Nasr) died, and the people were saddened and grieved by their passing.
- (أَوْحَى الشَّيْطَانُ) – "Shaytaan inspired their people". That is, the evil insinuations (*wiswaas*) of the Shaytaan.
- {الْأَنْصَابَ} – "Statues". In the image of the righteous men, which they would set in their places of gathering. They did this to remember their righteous deeds, so that when they saw them they would be encouraged to perform acts of worship (for Allah).
- (حَتَّى إِذَا هَلَكَ أَوْلِيَاكَ) – "Until these people passed away". Referring to those who constructed the idols in the image of the righteous men.
- (وَنُسِيَ الْعِلْمُ) – "Knowledge (of their origins) was forgotten". That is, the people became ignorant why the idols were initially created.

- (عُبِدَتْ) – “They were worshipped”. That is the ignorant people worshipped the idols which embodied the righteous men, after the Shaytaan whispered to them that their forefathers had previously worshipped these idols.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** Ibn Abbas interprets the *ayah* in Surat Nuh by explaining the origins of the idols worshiped during the time of Nuh. He explains that the idols were originally named after righteous men of a preceding generation who were deceased. Upon the death of these righteous men, the Shaytaan whispered into the hearts of the people of Nuh to glorify them excessively as a means of drawing closer to Allah. Thereafter, idols were made of them and finally they were worshipped besides Allah.

The commentary of Ibnul Qayyim is close in meaning to the *hadith* narrated by Ibn Abbas, however he adds that the People of Nuh first devoted themselves to the graves of these righteous men before sculpting idols of them.

- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** The *hadith* is clear evidence that excessive reverence and glorification of the righteous is a cause for their eventual worship besides Allah.

وَعَنْ عُمَرَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: لَا تُظَرُونِي كَمَا أَظَرَتِ النَّصَارَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ، إِنَّمَا أَنَا عَبْدٌ فَقُولُوا: عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ. أَخْرَجَاهُ.

Umar reported that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: Do not exaggerate in praise of me just as the Christians exaggerated in the praise of Jesus, son of Mary. I am but a slave, so call me Allah's slave and His Messenger. [Bukhari & Muslim]

- The author mentions that the *hadith* is present in both Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. This is not the case as the *hadith* with this wording is only narrated in Sahih Bukhari.
- **Umar Ibnul Khataab:** Ibn Nufayl al-Qurashi. *Ameer al-Mu'mineen*. He is the most virtuous of the *sahabah* after Abu Bakr. He was martyred in *Dhul Hijjah* in the year 23 A.H May Allah be pleased with him.
- (لَا تُظَرُونِي) – “Do not exaggerate me in praise”. Praise which is not legislated by Allah, and which may involve lies against Allah and His Messenger.
- (كَمَا أَظَرَتِ النَّصَارَى) – “As the Christians exaggerated in the Praise of Isa”. To the extent that they claimed his divinity, and that he was the son of Allah – far removed is Allah from what they atrociously claim!
- (فَقُولُوا: عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ) – “Call me Allah's slave and His Messenger”. That is, address me with what my Lord has described me with. To be a Messenger is noble in status, however more noble than that is that the Messengers were the slaves of Allah, which is why it is mentioned first in the *hadith*.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** The Prophet ﷺ specifically forbids his *ummah* from exaggerating his praises as the Christians did with Isa by claiming his divinity.
Since the Prophet ﷺ is just a servant and messenger of Allah, He commands, his *ummah* to address him by these two attributes, and never raise him higher than his due rank which Allah bestowed upon him.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** The *hadith* specifically prohibits exaggeration in the praise of the Prophet ﷺ by not ascribing any of the divine attributes to him. Such was the case of the Christians who exaggerated the praise of Isa to the extent that it led them to *shirk*. If excessive praise of the Prophet ﷺ is forbidden, then it is more forbidden for those below him in rank!

وقال رسول الله ﷺ: إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوَّ، فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ الْغُلُوَّ.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: Beware of exaggeration. Your predecessors perished on account of their exaggeration.

- The author did not mention the source of this *hadith*, nor did he mention its narrator. As for the source, it is narrated in the *sunan* of al-Nasaa'e and Ibn Ma'ajah and its grading is *saheeh* (authentic). As for the narrator, it was narrated on the authority of Ibn Abbas.
- (إِيَّاكُمْ) – “Beware”. A word of warning. It is a prohibitive order, making the action after it (*ghuluw*) forbidden (*haram*).
- (وَالْغُلُوَّ) – “Excessive reverence”. Exceeding the limits of praise (مدح) and veneration (تعظيم) through action or sayings.
- (أَهْلَكَ) – “Perished”. It can have two meanings, both which are correct:
 1. That through excessiveness they destroyed their *deen* and ultimately their Hereafter.
 2. That through their excessiveness they were physically destroyed and made to perish. That is, through their *ghuluw* they disobeyed Allah so He destroyed them.
- (مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ) – “Predecessors”. The nations that came before you who were sent a messenger and a book from Allah.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** The Prophet ﷺ warns his *ummah* against excessiveness in religion. This warning is general, and thus includes all forms of excessiveness in beliefs, sayings and actions. Therefore, excessive praise and veneration of the righteous is prohibited as it may be the cause for worshipping them besides Allah.
- The Prophet ﷺ justifies this prohibition by explaining that the destruction of previous nations was due to excessiveness in their religion. This *ummah* is prohibited from imitating them in this regard, as it may also cause their destruction.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** The *hadith* clearly prohibits excessiveness and affirms that it is a total loss, both in this world and in the Hereafter. Excessive reverence of the righteous falls under this general prohibition with greater reason, for it results in falling into *shirk*, as was the case with the Jews and the Christians as well as the people of Nuh.

وَلِمُسْلِمٍ عَنِ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: هَلَكَ الْمُتَنَطِّعُونَ. قَالَهَا ثَلَاثًا.

In Sahih Muslim, Abdullah bin Mas'ud reported that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: Destroyed are those who are extreme (in religion). He ﷺ said it three times. [Muslim]

- (هَلَكَ) – “Perished/destroyed”. As explained above.
- (الْمُتَنَطِّعُونَ) – “Extreme in religion”. The ones who delve deep into the matters of the religion in a manner which has not been legislated, thus becoming extreme. It is similar in meaning to *ghuluw*. For example, those who delve deep into the attributes of Allah and ask questions which the *sahabah* did not ask the Prophet ﷺ. Another example is the story of the cow in Surat al-Baqarah.
- (ثَلَاثًا) – “Thrice”. The Prophet ﷺ repeated the statement three times to emphasise the seriousness of the matter and to ensure that it had been thoroughly understood.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** The Prophet ﷺ warns his *ummah* that extremism and exaggeration lead to destruction in this life and in the Hereafter. This warning implies a prohibition.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** The *hadith* affirms that extremism is a form of excessiveness which is prohibited. It includes excessive reverence of the righteous, which may lead to, or even include, *shirk*.

- **Important issues of the Chapter**

1. **Whoever understood this chapter and the following two, will recognize clearly the "strangeness" of Islam and see Allah's wondrous power and wisdom to change hearts.** Because the majority of Muslims fall into this prohibition of *ghuluw* of the righteous. As a result, those upon the *haqq* are few. However, despite this strangeness, the hearts of the people are in Allah's hands; He can easily guide those who were previously astray in this regard.
2. **The first shirk on the earth happened due to the confusion regarding righteous persons (that they have attributed godly characteristics).** As was the story of the People of Nuh who were deceived by the *Shaytaan* and fell into *ghuluw* of their righteous predecessors – eventually worshipping them besides Allah.
3. **The first thing to cause changes in the religion of the Prophets and the reason for that, despite the knowledge that they were sent by Allah.** *Shirk* is what changed the religion of the Prophets, and the reason for that was *ghuluw* in the righteous.
4. **The acceptance of heresy though it is against legal laws and inborn nature.** That is, heresy (*bid'a*) will be accepted by people who do not hold the laws of Allah in any regard, and whose inborn nature (*fitrah*) has been corrupted.
5. **The reason for all of that is the mixing of truth with falsehood: firstly, the exaggeration in the love of the righteous; and secondly, the action of people with religious knowledge intending to do good (performed with well intentions); but the later generations thought that they intended something else.**
6. **Explanation of the verse in Surah Nuh (71:23).** As explained above
7. **Human nature towards the truth weakens in the heart while falsehood increases (except upon whom Allah has bestowed His mercy).** As was the case of the people of Nuh. Their inclination towards the truth diminished, to the extent, that they committed *shirk*. This excludes the believers whom Allah bestows His guidance upon them, whereby the falsehood in their heart diminishes and guidance increases.
8. **It confirms the sayings of righteous predecessors that heresy (bid'ah) is the main cause leading to Kufr (disbelief) [and that it (bid'ah) is more loved by Iblis than sinfulness because one may repent from sins but will not repent from bid'ah].**
9. **Satan (the devil) knows what the result of heresy is (and how much it will misguide), even if one commits it with good intention.** Because it was the *Shaytaan* who initially inspired them to build the idols with good intentions. This is why innovations in the *deen* are prohibited, no matter how good or how small they may initially appear to be.
10. **Knowledge of the general rule that excess and exaggeration (in the righteous ones) is prohibited, and knowledge of what it leads to.** As per the evidences in the chapter. It leads to destruction in this world and in the Hereafter.
11. **The harm of seclusion at the grave even with intention of performing a righteous deed.** As per the statement of Ibnul Qayyim regarding the People of Nuh. This will be discussed in the following chapters.
12. **The prohibition against statues and the wisdom in destroying them.** Their destruction removes the path to *shirk*.
13. **Greatness of the matter within this story and how badly it is needed (i.e. the lesson within) in the face of the heedlessness and neglect of it.** The matter referred to is that of the People of *Nuh* and their excessive reverence of the righteous amongst them. Although they meant well it led to worshipping them besides Allah.

- 14. It is absolutely amazing! And more amazing is that despite their (people of Bid'ah) reading this story in the books of Tafsir and Hadith, along with their understanding of its meaning, and knowing about the obstruction that Allah has put between them and their hearts, they believed that the deed of the people of Nuh (i.e. over praising the dead and memorializing their graves with statues) is the best type of worship. They believed in what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden which is the disbelief (Kufr) that permits the taking of life and wealth ...!**
- 15. The declaration that they only wished the righteous ones to intercede for them.** Referring to the grave worshippers of today. They claim that they worship the righteous in the graves as a form of intercession before Allah. This false claim is what led them to *shirk*.
- 16. Their assumption that those scholars who first shaped the statues had intended so.** The scholars referred to are those who had knowledge of the state of those righteous men, not the scholars who have true knowledge of Allah and His *deen*, as they would never do such a thing. Those so-called scholars shaped those statues as a means of intercession and encouraging themselves towards worship.
- 17. The tremendous statement of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: "Do not exaggerate in praise of me just as the Christians had exaggerated in the praise of Jesus, son of Mary". May the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him who has conveyed the clear message!** As per the *hadith*.
- 18. The admonition by the Prophet ﷺ to us of destruction of those going to extreme in religion.** As per the *hadith*. He did not merely inform us of their destruction but warned us against following their path in this regard.
- 19. The clear statement that they (the statues) were not worshipped until true knowledge was forgotten. This explains the value of the presence of knowledge and the harm of losing it.** Because when knowledge disappears, ignorance sets in, and just as night follows day – *shirk* follows ignorance.
- 20. The reason for the loss of knowledge is the death of scholars.** The authentic evidence for this is present in the *sunnah*, however how its relevance to the story of the People of Nuh is not clear. The scholars mentioned are not those well-versed in the *deen* of Allah, otherwise they would not have built the statues in the first place.