

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Before the reader is some priceless benefits from the book of Imām Muḥammad b. ‘Abdul Wahhāb, *Kitāb al Tawḥīd*, ‘Chapter: Whoever obeys the Scholars and Rulers in them declaring impermissible what Allāh made permissible or them declaring permissible what Allāh made impermissible, has taken them as deities besides Allāh.

These benefits are taken from the explanation titled *I‘ānah al-Mustafīd Bī Sharḥ Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* by the ‘Allāmah, al-Shaykh Ṣāliḥ b. Fawzān al-Fawzān, may Allāh preserve him.

I chose to translate and summarize the benefits from this chapter for many reasons, from them:

1. The Shaykh offers a concise, but very clear explanation of the categories of people who obey the scholars and rulers (and it applies to anyone less than them) in them declaring impermissible what Allāh made permissible and vice versa. We find today many people who are quick to perform *Takfīr* on individuals as it relates to this matter, without knowing the speech of the scholars concerning it. The vast majority, if not all of those people, are not from those who are qualified to issue rulings on the serious topic of *Takfīr*, as it is only reserved for the people of knowledge.
2. This chapter contains many other benefits related to some of the foundations of the Salafi methodology, such as how to deal with the Muslim rulers, giving precedence to the speech of the Prophet over everyone’s speech, the obligation to adhering to the evidence when one knows its authenticity, leaving off fanaticism and bias towards *Madhabs* and individuals, and other priceless benefits.

The following is the text of the chapter, which will be followed by summarized benefits from the explanation by Shaykh al-Fawzān.

باب من أطاع العلماء والأمرء في تحريم ما أحل الله أو تحليل ما حرمه فقد اتخذهم أرباباً

Chapter: Whoever Obeys a Scholar or a Ruler by Prohibiting What Allāh Has Permitted or Permitting What Allāh Has Prohibited Has Taken Them as Partners Besides Allāh

وقال ابن عباس: يوشك أن تنزل عليكم حجارة من السماء، أقول: قال رسول الله - صلى الله عليه وسلم -، وتقولون: قال أبو بكر وعمر؟!

Ibn ‘Abbās said: “Stones are about to rain down upon you from the sky: I say to you: ‘Allāh's Messenger said,’ and you reply: ‘But Abū Bakr and ‘Umar said.’”

وقال الإمام أحمد بن حنبل: عجبت لقوم عرفوا الإسناد وصحته، يذهبون إلى رأي سفيان، والله تعالى يقول: {فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ} [النور: 63]. أتدري ما الفتنة؟ الفتنة: الشرك، لعله إذا رد بعض قوله أن يقع في قلبه شيء من الزيف فيهلك.

Imam Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal said: "I am amazed at those people who know the Isnād and its authenticity, and yet, in spite of this, they follow the opinion of Sufyān, for Allāh says:

"Let those who oppose his [the Messenger's] commandment beware, lest some fitnah befall them or a painful torment be inflicted on them" (Qur'ān 24:63)

Do you know what that fitnah is? That fitnah is Shirk. Maybe the rejection of some of his words would cause one to doubt and deviate in his heart and thereby be destroyed."

عن عدي بن حاتم: أنه سمع النبي - صلى الله عليه وسلم - يقرأ هذه الآية: «اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَابَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ» [التوبة: 31]. الآية. فقلت له: إنا لسنا نعبدهم قال: «أليس يجرمون ما أحل الله فتحرمونه، ويحلّون ما حرم الله، فتحلّونه؟» فقلت: بلى. قال: «فتلك عبادتهم» رواه أحمد، والترمذي وحسنه.

On the authority of 'Adī b. Ḥātim, it is reported that he heard the Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) reciting this verse:

"They have taken their rabbis and their monks as lords beside Allāh and [they take as a lord] Al-Masīḥ, 'Isá, the son of Maryam, yet they were not commanded but to worship One God: None has the right to be worshipped but He - Praise and Glory to Him: [Far is He] from having the partners they associate [with Him]" (Qur'an 9:31)

"And I said to him: 'We don't worship them.' He said: 'Do they not forbid what Allāh has permitted, thus you all then forbid it, and do they not make permissible for you what Allāh has forbidden, and thus you all then make it permissible?' I replied: 'Certainly!' He said: 'That is worshipping them.' (Narrated by At-Tirmidhī, who graded it as Ḥasan)

Benefits

- I. **First benefit:** Declaring matters to be permissible or impermissible is the sole right of Allāh, which no one shares with Him. Whoever declares something permissible or impermissible without an evidence from the Book of Allāh or the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), they have made themselves an associate with Allāh; and whoever obeys the one who does that has made that person an associate along with Allāh in the matter of legislation. This is what is known as Shirk al-Ṭā'ah (Associating partners with Allāh in matters of obedience).
- II. **Second Benefit:** Obeying the scholars and the rulers in the likes of these affairs is Shirk, (meaning) obeying them in them declaring permissible what Allāh made impermissible or them declaring impermissible what Allāh made permissible. (1) So if the one who obeyed them knows that they opposed what Allāh commanded in that matter, but still purposely obeys them and deems it lawful to do so, then this is Major Shirk that removes one out of the fold of Islam. (2) If the one that obeyed them believes that doing so is impermissible and he acknowledges that it is an error, yet he obeys them following his whims and desires, although acknowledging that it's disobedience and sin, then this is minor shirk. (3) If one obeys them but does not know that they opposed Allāh's legislation, rather they thought they were upon the truth, then this one is excused, if his like is truly ignorant of these matters (i.e. he doesn't have the ability to investigate and learn the truth).
- III. **Third benefit:** Obeying the scholars and the rulers in that which is not sin and disobedience is obligatory. Allāh says: "O you who believe, obey Allāh, obey His Messenger, and those in authority amongst you." [al-Nisā 4:59]
- IV. **Fourth benefit:** His saying "And those in authority," means both the scholars and the rulers, they are both considered those in authority. The scholars are those who clarify Islamic legislative rulings, and the rulers are those who see that they are implemented.
- V. **Fifth benefit:** In the statement of Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه) "Stones are about to rain down upon you from the sky..." Ibn 'Abbās said this when it reached him that the two Rightly Guided Caliphs, Abū Bakr and 'Umar (رضي الله عنهما) held the opinion that one should not include performing the 'Umrah along with the Hajj (in one trip), whereas the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) commanded that the one who travels to Hajj without a sacrificial animal to slaughter should make their intention for 'Umrah instead (i.e. then to assume the intention to make Hajj on the 8th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah¹), which the Prophet (ﷺ) preferred. So Ibn 'Abbās understood that it is obligatory to perform the 'Umrah before Hajj for the one who did not bring a sacrificial animal to slaughter, in accordance to what the Messenger commanded and emphasized to his companions. However, the two Rightly Guided Caliphs, Abū Bakr and 'Umar were upon the opinion that one does not have to perform the 'Umrah right before the Hajj; rather, one can go with only the intention of Hajj and perform (Hajj) *al-Ifrād*, which they saw to be better. They said this so the people will not abandon visiting the Ka'bah for the rest of the year (outside the season of Hajj), because if one gathers between the Hajj and 'Umrah during one trip,

¹ This is known as Hajj *al Tamattu'*.

perhaps they will not come back later that year to perform *‘Umrah*¹. So this was their opinion, and it is an issue of *Ijtihad* (i.e. independent deduction according to what they understood from the text), but if an issue of *Ijtihad* opposes the clear text, then it is not permissible to act by it. So if it was the case that Ibn ‘Abbās rebuked those who took the opinion of the two Rightly Guided Caliphs, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, because it was *Ijtihad* that opposed the text, and a reason that necessitates punishment, then how about those who obey the rulers and leaders in declaring things permissible or impermissible without proof?

- VI. **Sixth benefit:** The previous narration shows the obligation of respecting the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and it is the source of return after the Book of Allāh. Furthermore, if matters of *Ijtihad* arise from the scholars who are capable of doing, then their *ijtihad* must be compared to the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ). Whatever of that is supported by the text we accept, and whatever opposes it we leave, even if the one who said it is from the best of people like Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, let alone anyone else.
- VII. **Seventh benefit:** The permissible *Ijtihad* is to extract legislative rulings from the evidences contained in the Book and the Sunnah, but when it is applied it is only permissible for us to take the statements of the scholars that are founded upon evidence. It is impermissible for us to accept what opposes the evidence, due to one either having fanaticism towards the one who made the statement, or because the statement goes in accordance to one’s desires and personal interests; rather, the point of return is the Book and Sunnah. “And if you differ in anything, then return it back to Allāh and His Messenger if you truly believe in Allāh and the Last day.” [al-Nisā 4:59]
- VIII. **Eighth benefit:** It is upon the common person to ask the people of knowledge and take their statement, due to the statement of Allāh, “Ask the people of knowledge if you do not know”. [al-Naḥl 16:43], [al-Anbiyā 21:7]
- IX. **Ninth benefit:** Regarding the statement of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal (رحمته الله), “I am amazed at one who knows the *Isnad* and its authenticity, but yet in spite of that, they go to the opinion of Sufyān.” The meaning of ‘amazed’ here is the criticism and rejection of this matter. The *Isnād* is a chain of narrators who narrate from the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), beginning at the initial narrator back to the Messenger, whether the chain be long or short. The *Isnād* must be studied and examined in order to know the condition of its narrators as far as their trustworthiness, memory, and precision, or the absence thereof. If it is found in a chain that its narrator is upright (i.e. truthful and trustworthy), possessing precision, connected all the way to the end, not being *Shadh*², nor *Mu‘all*³, then

¹ Meaning, they feared it would result in less people travelling to Makkah to perform worship outside the season of Hajj.

² A *Shadh* hadeeth is that a person whom narrations are at the level of being accepted, opposes those who are more foremost than him either from the aspect of trustworthiness, or in number.

³ A *Mu‘all* hadeeth, or an *illah* in a hadeeth, is a hidden matter that affects the soundness of a hadeeth, although what is apparent is that the hadeeth is authentic.

it is a hadeeth that is Ṣaḥīḥ¹. If any of the aforementioned conditions have any deficiencies, the Ḥadīth is then reduced to being either Ḥasan or Ḍa'īf (weak). The scholars are those who have the ability to know and distinguish those matters.

In this is a refutation on some of the rabble-rousers who give precedence to their intellects and say “Even if the *Isnad* is authentic, this doesn’t mean that the text of the Ḥadīth is authentic”; they criticize narrations in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī that have authentic chains because they go against their intellects². Subhan Allāh! Must the speech of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) submit to the intellects? It is obligatory upon the one who believes in the Messenger to give precedence to his statement, believe in it, and act upon, without any debate or arguing. “And it is not for a believing male or a believing female, if Allāh and His Messenger decrees a matter that they should any option in their decision”. [Al-Aḥzāb 33:36]

- X. **Tenth benefit:** Imam Ahmad’s statement “Yet in spite of that, they take the opinion of Sufyān”. Meaning they leave the authentic *Isnad* established back to the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and they go to the opinion of Sufyān, and he was a virtuous Imam in the religion. Sufyān b. Sa’īd al-Thawrī (رحمته الله). He was a *Faqīh* and a *Muḥaddith*, but he is like other than him from the Imams (of the religion); it is not permissible to place his statement in front of the statement of the Messenger (ﷺ). Further, he is not pleased with that, as the other Imams were not pleased with that.

Imām Mālik (رحمته الله) said: “Each of our statements is either rejected or accepted, except the one in this grave.” He meant the grave of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).

Imām al-Shāfi’ī (رحمته الله) said: “If a hadeeth is authentic then it is my Madhab”.

And he said: “If my statement opposes the statement of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), then take the statement of the Messenger of Allāh and throw my statement against the wall (i.e. disregard it)”.

He also said: “The Muslim (scholars) are in agreement that if a Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) becomes clear to anyone, it’s not permissible that they leave it for the statement of anyone, no matter who they may be”.

Imām Mālik (رحمته الله) said: “Is it the case that each time a man comes to us more argumentative than the other, we leave off what Jibrīl brought down to Muḥammad (ﷺ), to give in to their argumentation”.

¹ These are the five conditions of a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth.

² Such as the hadeeth in Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī “If a fly lands in one of your vessels, then submerge it completely, then remove it, because in one wing is the sickness, and in the other is the cure”.

Imām Ahmad (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said this statement of his “I am amazed at those people who know the *Isnad* and its authenticity, and yet, in spite of this, they follow the opinion of Sufyān”.

And Imam Abū Ḥanīfah (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said “If a statement comes from the Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), then we accept it wholeheartedly; and if it comes from the Sahabah then we except it wholeheartedly; and if it comes from the Tābi‘ūn, then they are men just like we are men.” This is because he was from the era of the followers of the Tābi‘ūn and he learned from the Tābi‘ūn. Abū Ḥanīfah was the earliest of the four Imams and it was said that he took knowledge from some of the Sahabah, but this has not been established. But this is his statement; he gives precedence to the statement of the Messenger without any dispute, and he did not give precedence to anyone’s statement over that. After the Messenger he gave precedence to the statement of the companions, and no one who came after the companions are equal to them. As for after the companions, he said: “They are men and we are men”. He meant by this that they were of similar levels in comprehension and in knowledge.

So these are their statements, which shows the obligation of accepting whatever is authentically established upon the Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Also is shows that the independent deductions of the scholars are benefitted from and studied, however, if any of that opposes the evidence, the evidence is what is taken and accepted. Likewise, it is not permissible for a person to cling fanatically to a person, because if one fanatically clings to a statement that opposes the evidence, they fall into this prohibition and they become like those who take their monks and priests as deities besides Allāh.

- XI. **Eleventh benefit:** We do not reject *fiqh* as some of the ignorant or beginners may think; rather, we consider it a great fortune that contains an abundance of knowledge. So we study *fiqh*, but we only take that which is founded on solid evidence. Whatever we find that opposes the evidence, it is impermissible to accept it, although we make an excuse for the one (i.e. the scholar) who held that opinion, and we respect him because he did not intend to oppose the evidence. But the *Mujtahid* is correct sometimes and incorrect at other times, and if he is correct he receives two rewards and if he is incorrect he still receives one reward, and his mistake is forgiven, as it comes in the authentic ḥadīth.
- XII. **Twelfth benefit:** There are four types of people as it relates to *ijtihad*.
1. The one who can make absolute *Ijtihad*, whereas he can go to the Book and Sunnah and extract rulings from them without having to make *Taqīd* (i.e. following the statement of a scholar). This is the highest of levels, but it only applies to the one who fulfils the known conditions of *ijtihad* which are: that one is insightful regarding the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), one is knowledgeable about the language of the Arab in which the Qur’ān was revealed, and that one is knowledgeable about the verses that are *Muḥkam* and *Mutashabih*¹ and also the texts that were abrogated and what abrogated them (*Nāsikh* and *Mansūkh*). Also having knowledge of the absolute and

¹ *Muḥkam* verses are the verses that are not in need of an explanation by other verses of the Qur’an. *Mutashabih* verses must be referred back to the *Muḥkam* verses to be properly understood.

qualified texts (*Muṭlaq* and *Muqayyad*), and the specific and general texts (*Khāṣ* and *‘Ām*), and has insight on the different manners of extracting from the text. Meaning, he has qualifications. This is the one that can make *Ijtihad*. This level is like that of the four Imāms: Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, al Shāfi‘ī, Aḥmad (and) Sufyān al-Thawrī and al-Awzā‘ī. Allāh gave these individuals the ability to make *Ijtihad*.

2. The one who cannot make absolute *Ijtihād*; however, he is able to know the strongest stance (*al-Tarjih*) from the statements of the people of knowledge by him knowing from their statements what is supported by the evidence and what is not supported by the evidence.
3. The one who cannot make *al Tarjeeh* (i.e. know what is strongest stance from the statements of the scholars). He is considered from the *Muqallidīn* (i.e. those who make *Taqīd* of the madhab prevalent in their country). But, if he knows that a particular statement is not supported by evidence, he must not accept it. As for is he does not know that and it hasn’t become clear to him any opposition (to the evidence), then there is no problem that he makes *Taqīd* and accepts the statements of the trustworthy people of knowledge.
4. The one who cannot do any of the three; he cannot make absolute *Ijtihād*, he cannot make *al-Tarjih* and cannot make *taqīd* of a *madhab*, such as the case with the common layman. This one must ask the people of knowledge, as Allāh the Most High said: “Ask the people of knowledge if you do not know”. So he must ask the most trustworthy scholar he knows, one he feels comfortable with and trust their knowledge and actions, then take their verdict. So it is obligatory that a person knows their level and not place themselves on a higher status than they deserve. Rather, the affair is more serious than that: it is that one fears Allāh, because this matter is one of declaring things permissible and impermissible; it is a matter of paradise and the hellfire. So one shouldn’t involve their self in matters they are unable to get out of.

XIII. **Thirteenth benefit:** Shaykh Muḥammad b. ‘Abdul Wahhāb (رحمته الله), author of Kitāb al-Tawḥīd, his students, and those who came after them from the scholars of this land (i.e. Saudi Arabia) would say: “We are Ḥanbalī, but this does not mean that we follow everything in the Ḥanbalī *madhab* without examining it (first). Rather, if the proof points to a particular statement (that was said) we take it, even if it isn’t from the Ḥanbalī *Madhab*, such as the Maliki *madhab*, the Shāfi‘ī *madhab*, or the Hanafi *madhab*; we search out the proofs and evidences¹.” And this doesn’t prevent a person from being Ḥanbalī; and if he accepts a statement because it is founded upon evidence and goes against the statement of Ibn Ḥanbal, he takes it because this is what his Imām directed him to do. He (Ibn Ḥanbal) said: “Do not follow me upon an error”. All of the Imāms said this, and not one from them ever claimed infallibility or perfection, or ever said to the people, “Do not go against my *madhab*”. Rather, they would warn from this way (of thinking). So if you take the evidence, then it reality you are in agreement with your Imām, but if you accept his mistake, then you have opposed your Imām, even if you claim a fanatical attachment to him.

¹ This is a refutation against those who claim that Muḥammad b. ‘Abdul Wahhāb and the scholars of Saudi Arabia that treaded his path in knowledge, action, and Da’wah are not Salafī but only Ḥanbalī scholars. This clearly shows that they were upon the way of the Salaf, taking the evidence wherever it came from.

- XIV. **Fourteenth benefit:** Regarding the verse: “Let those who oppose his [the Messenger's] commandment beware, lest some fitnah befall them or a painful torment be inflicted on them” [al-Nūr 24:63]

Whoever opposes the statement of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) purposely, following his desires, or fanatically following his Imam, they are threatened with two punishments:

The first punishment: That deviation is placed in his heart. This is because since he left the truth he will be afflicted with falsehood. Allāh says “And when they turned away, Allāh turned their hearts away” [al-Şaff 61:5].

And He the Most High said: “And whenever there comes down a Surah, they look at one another saying ‘does anyone see you?’ Then they turn away Allāh has turned their hearts because they are a people that do not understand” [al-Tawbah 9:127]

When they turned away from accepting the Qur’an when it was revealed and (turned) from learning it, Allāh turned their hearts away from accepting the truth as a punishment for them.

Allāh says, “And We shall turn their hearts and their eyes away (from guidance), as they refused to believe therein for the first time” [al-An‘ām 6:110] When they rejected (the truth) when it first came to them, Allāh afflicted them by turning their hearts and eyes from the truth as a punishment for them, so afterwards they will not be able to accept the truth.

The second punishment: “Or afflict them with a severe punishment”. Meaning in their bodies by being killed in this life through Allāh sending against them who will annihilate them and kill them, either from the believers or other than the believers, as a punishment for them. “Or afflict them with a severe punishment”, meaning if they die without being killed, then they are threatened with the punishment of the hellfire. So this is the severe threat of opposing the Messenger (ﷺ). So leaving off the command of the Messenger and taking the statements of the scholars and rulers that oppose the statement of the Messenger when they declare things permissible or impermissible is a cause of fitnah (a trial) or a severe punishment.

- XV. **Fifteenth benefit:** From the ḥadīth of ‘Adī b. Ḥātim (رضي الله عنه): “Yet they were not commanded but to worship One God: None has the right to be worshipped but He - Praise and Glory to Him: [Far is He] from having the partners they associate [with Him]” [al - Tawbah 9:31]

So Allāh called this Shirk and He exalted Himself above that. This proves that obeying priests and monks in them declaring impermissible what Allāh made permissible or them

declaring permissible what Allāh made impermissible is considered Shirk with Allāh¹, the Mighty and Exalted. And the ḥadīth of ‘Adī b. Ḥātim is considered an explanation of the verse.

- XVI. **Sixteenth benefit:** This (i.e. the ḥadīth of ‘Adī b. Ḥātim) proves that obeying priests and monks in them declaring impermissible what is permissible or permissible what is impermissible is worshipping them. Worship is not restricted to prostration, bowing, supplication, slaughtering, vowing or other than that which is done by the idol worshippers (for other than Allāh). Rather, it also includes obeying the creation in disobedience to the Creator and opposing Him in what He legislated; this is included in worship. So worship is general and not restricted to only one type of worship, rather it includes everything that is a right of Allāh, and from that is declaring things halal and haram.

A summary of some important *Uṣūl* (Foundations) taken from this chapter:

1- Shirk is not restricted to just prostrating, bowing, supplicating, or slaughtering for other than Allāh, rather it is to turn anything to other than Allāh from those things that are the sole right of Allāh.

2- The obligation to obey the Muslim ruler, so long as he does not command with the disobedience of Allāh, and if he commands with the disobedience of Allāh, then there is no obedience to the creation if it involves disobedience to the Creator.

3- The obligation of leaving every statement that opposes the statement of the Messenger of Allāh (صلى الله عليه وسلم), no matter who the statement came from.

4- Knowing the status of the scholars of the Sunnah, and if they err, their error is not accepted but we still maintain respect and preserve their honor.

5- The Muslim gives precedence to the *dalīl* (evidence), and does not have fanatical attachments to a *madhab* or a person.

This is what was easy to compile and I ask Allāh to make it a benefit for the reader.

Abū Suhayl Anwar Wright

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¹ Refer back to second benefit where the Shaykh clarified when obeying them in these matters is considered Major Shirk and when it is considered minor Shirk.