

THERE WAS A TIME OF MANY SCHOLARS AND FEW SPEAKERS— NOW THERE ARE MANY SPEAKERS AND FEW SCHOLARS

The *Hadīth* of Abu Dharr Al-Ghifārī (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ)

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YOU ARE IN A TIME OF MANY SCHOLARS AND ONLY A FEW SPEAKERS

By Abu Khadeejah Abdul-Wāhid Alam

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all creation; may Allah extol the mention of our noble Prophet Muhammad in the highest company of Angels and give him peace and security—and his family, his Companions and all those who follow him correctly until the establishment of the Hour.

Abu Dharr (رضي الله عنه) narrated, and the report is ascribed to the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) that he said:

“You are in an age of many scholars, and few speakers. So, whoever leaves off even a tenth of what he knows is destroyed. Then after this will come a time wherein there will be many speakers and only a few scholars—and whoever clings to even a tenth of what he knows in that time will be saved.”¹

When preachers (*khutabā*) among *ahlul-ahwā*, *ahlul-bid’ah*, and the callers to sin and disobedience, and the ignorant callers become numerous, they will misguide the people causing more corruption in the *Ummah* than rectification as is the case in our times, *wallāhul-musta’ān*².

So, from the distinguishing signs of the Saved Sect, who are the Aided Group [that remain manifest upon the truth generation after generation until the command of Allah comes] is that they love the

¹ At-Tirmidhī, no. 2267, Ahmad in his *Musnad*, no. 21372 and others. Graded *sahih* by Shaikh Al-Albānī in *As-Sahīhah*, no. 2510.

² i.e., Allah’s aid is sought from such matters.

Sahābah, the imāms of the Salaf, and the scholars in every age. Imām Abu Muhammad Al-Hasan Ibn ‘Ali Al-Barbahāri (d. 329 H) said:

“If you see a man loving Abu Hurairah, Anas Ibn Mālīk and Usayd Ibn Huḍayr then know that he is man of Sunnah, *inshā’ Allāh*.

And if you see man loving Ayyoob Ibn ‘Awn, Yoonus Ibn ‘Ubaid, Abdullāh Ibn Idrees al-Awdi, ash-Sha’bi, Mālīk Ibn Mighwal Yazeed Ibn Zurai’, Mu’ādh Ibn Mu’ādh, Wahb Ibn Jareer, Hammād Ibn Salamah, Hammād Ibn Zayd, Mālīk Ibn Anas, Al-Awzā’ee and Zā’idah Ibn Qudāmah, then know that he is a person of Sunnah.

And if you see man loving Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Al-Hajjāj Ibn Minhāl and Ahmad Ibn Naṣr, and he mentions them with good, and he speaks with their speech, then know he is a person of Sunnah.” (See *Sharhus-Sunnah*, 120-121)

And in these times, we say: ‘If you find a man loving Abdul-‘Azeez Ibn Bāz, Muhammad Nāsirud-Deen Al-Albāni, Muhammad Ibn Ṣālih al-‘Uthaimeen, Muhammad Amān al-Jāme’e, Muqbil Ibn Hādi al-Wādi’ee, Sālih Ibn Muhammad al-Luhaydān, Sālih Ibn Fawzān al-Fawzān, Rabee’ Ibn Hādi ‘Umayr al-Madkhali and ‘Ubayd Ibn Abdillāh al-Jābiri, then known he is a person of Sunnah.

And from the distinguishing signs of the innovators, and the people of desires is their criticism of the narrations, and rejection of the *hadeeth*, and their following the opinions, ideas, thoughts and philosophies men! So, *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā’ah* cling to the narrations (*āthār*) just as Imām al-Barbahāri (رحمته الله) said:

“If you hear a man defaming the narrations (*yaṭ’an ‘alal-athār*), or rejecting them, or desiring other than the narrations, then question his religion—and have no

doubt that he is a person of desires, an innovator.”
(*Sharhus-Sunnah*, pp. 115-116)

Qutaybah Ibn Sa’eed (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said:

“If you see a man loving the People of *Hadeeth* (*Ahlul-Hadeeth*), then he is upon the *Sunnah*—and as for the one who opposes this, know that he is an innovator.” (See *Shi’ar Aṣḥ-hābil-Hadeeth*, p. 7)

Abu Hātim ar-Rāzi (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said:

“The distinguishing sign of *Ahlul-Bid’ah* is that they revile the People of Narrations.” (Al-Lālikā’ee, 1/179)

The righteous people, the people of *Sunnah*, will be few in later times, and the opposers will be numerous. The further we are from the time of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), his Companions, the *Tābi’īn* and those who followed them, the more evil the times will be. Zubayr Ibn ‘Adiyy said: “We came to Anas Ibn Mālik (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) and we complained to him about the oppression and tyranny of Al-Hajjāj³, so he said:

اصْبِرُوا فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَأْتِي عَلَيْكُمْ زَمَانٌ إِلَّا الَّذِي بَعْدَهُ شَرٌّ مِنْهُ حَتَّى تَلْقَوْا
رَبَّكُمْ

‘Be patient, for indeed there will not come a time except that the time that comes after it is more evil

³ Adh-Dhababī (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said: “Allah destroyed him in middle-age in Ramadān in the year 95 AH. He was an oppressor, a despot and a tyrant, a hater of the Prophet’s household (*Nāsibī*) and a spiller of innocent blood. He besieged Ibn Az-Zubayr (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) in Makkah and he destroyed the Ka’bah with catapults (mangonel). We revile him and we do not love him, rather we hate him for Allah’s sake. His good deeds are drowned by the sea of his sins, and his end affair is with Allah.” See *Siyar A’lām An-Nubalā*, 4/343 (abridged).

than it until you meet you Lord. I heard these words from your Prophet (ﷺ).”⁴

Shaikh Al-Albānī (رحمته الله) explained: “It is important to understand this *hadīth* in light of the narrations that have preceded and other narrations such as the coming of the Mahdi and the descent of ‘Īsā (عليه السلام) which show that this *hadīth* is not taken absolutely or without exception, rather there are exceptions. So it not permitted for the people to think it is absolute and thus fall into despair because that is not the trait of a believer:

إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْيُسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

‘Certainly no one despairs of Allah’s Mercy, except those who disbelieve.’ (Yusuf: 87)

We ask that Allah makes us believers in Him truly.”⁵

Ibn Hajr Al-Asqalānī (رحمته الله) said: “Then I found from Abdullah Ibn Mas’ūd (رضي الله عنه) the clear intent of this *hadīth*. And he is more worthy of being followed in his understanding. Ya’qūb Ibn Shaybah reported from Hārith Ibn Husayrah from Zayd Ibn Wahb who said: Abdullah Ibn Mas’ūd (رضي الله عنه) said:

“There will not come upon you a day except that it will be worse than the day that came before it until the Hour is established. I do not mean worse in terms of prosperity in living, or worse in terms of wealth that is benefitted from. Rather, there will not come upon you a day except that it will be less in knowledge than the day that passed before it. So, when the scholars have passed away, the people will

⁴ Al-Bukhārī, no. 7068, At-Tirmidhī, no. 2206.

⁵ *As-Silsilah As-Sahīhah*, 1/31 under the heading: The Future is for Islam, 1/36.

be upon the same level—they will neither enjoin the good nor forbid the evil, and as a result, they will be destroyed.”⁶

And in narration he (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) said:

“But rather, your *‘ulamā* and your *fuqahā* will die and you will not find anyone to replace them—then there will come a people who will give *fatāwā* from their opinions.”⁷

So we mentioned earlier that Abu Dharr (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) narrated from the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

“You are in an age of many scholars, and few speakers. So, whoever leaves off even a tenth of what he knows is destroyed. Then after this will come a time wherein there will be many speakers and only a few scholars—and whoever clings to even a tenth of what he knows in that time will be saved.”

In the time of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his Companions (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ) the scholars were numerous, and even in the generations that followed, the scholars of *hadīth* and *Sunnah*, who cultivated the *Ummah* upon the sound Creed were widespread. These generations were a good sign for the *Ummah*. In that era, the talkers who would speak with ignorance and desires were few and were subdued by the people of Truth. So, whoever left off even a tenth of what he knew in that golden age would be in loss, have destroyed himself, and deprived himself of good. That is because the Religion was established, strong, apparent and there was clarity upon the *Sunnah*. A Muslim was able to hold fast to every aspect of Religion without hinderance or fear from enemies, whether close or far. Therefore,

⁶ Hasan, reported by Ad-Dārimī, no. 194, and Ibn Hajr graded the chain of narration as *jayyid* in *Fathul-Bārī*, 13/26-27.

⁷ Ibid.

whoever abandoned an affair that he was able to perform from the obligations was sinful.

So why would the people in the time when the scholars are few be saved by just clinging to a tenth of what they knew? In a time when there are very few scholars, and few callers to the Sunnah, or in some places of the earth where there are no scholars and no callers to Allah, then in that situation, there is no one to enjoin the good or to forbid the evil. Due to this, sin and disobedience is widespread, and the people of desires and innovations hold sway in communities, and they misguide the masses. It is in those societies that deviations such as grave worship, calling upon the dead, celebration of the Prophet's (ﷺ) birthday, building shrines over graves, etc., is widespread, not to mention lying, theft, murder, usury, fornication, drinking, cutting the ties of kinship and so on. So, in these societies, whoever finds the truth has been truly guided and given success. It is difficult in situations such as this to hold on to the Sunnah, or to revive the *Sunnah* and to combat innovations and resist sins. They live among people who commit immoral acts and major sins, and if they are living in the lands of the non-muslims, then their situation will be even worse, *wallāhul-musta'ān*. These are times when holding on to the *Sunnah* and Islam is like holding on to hot coals. Ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه) stated:

“How will you be when you are surrounded by *fitan* (innovations, desires and misguidance)? A time wherein the young one grows old knowing only *fitnah* and the old one reaches old age knowing only *fitnah*. It will become so engrained that if the *fitnah* is abandoned, it will be said, ‘The *Sunnah* has been abandoned.’”

It was said to Ibn Mas'ūd (رحمهُ اللهُ): “When will that happen O father of ‘Abdur-Rahmān?” Ibn Mas'ūd replied, “When your scholars pass away and the ignorant among you are

numerous; when the reciters of Qurān among you are plenty, when the men of understanding (*fuqahā*) are scarce; your leaders are numerous and the trustworthy among you are little; when the worldly possessions are sought through the deeds of the Hereafter and the Religion is studied for other than the Religion.”⁸

So, we must strive to be from those who seek out the reward of the Strangers (*Ghurabā*) and the holders of hot coals, may Allah bless you, just as the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

يَأْتِي عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ الصَّابِرُ فِيهِمْ عَلَى دِينِهِ كَالْقَابِضِ عَلَى الْجُمْرِ

“There will come a time upon the people when the patient amongst them upon his Religion will be like one holding on to hot coals.”⁹

And in a wording, he (ﷺ) said:

“The one who acts rightly during that time will have the reward of fifty men among you who does that deed.” We asked: “The reward of fifty of us or fifty of them?” He replied: “The reward of fifty of you.”¹⁰

Who are those people in our times? They are without a doubt, the *Salafis*, *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Hadith*—those who patiently hold on to the truth whilst bearing the onslaught from the people of *bid'ah*,

⁸ The translation of the *hadith* has been made according to its correct meaning. It is *sahih*, reported by Ad-Dārimī, nos. 191-192, and Shaikh Al-Albānī (رحمته الله) said in *Qiyām Ramadān*, p. 3: “It is authentic as the statement of Ibn Mas’ūd and in its ruling, it is elevated to the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ).”

⁹ At-Tirmidhī, no. 2260.

¹⁰ Abu Dawūd, no. 4341, At-Tirmidhi, no. 3058, Ibn Mājah no. 4014.

opposition and sins. So, upon us is to hold fast to the Truth until we meet our Lord.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all creation; may Allah extol the mention of our noble Prophet Muhammad in the highest company of Angels and give him peace and security—and his family, his Companions and all those who follow him correctly until the establishment of the Hour.