

“Forty *Hadīth* in Clarification of the *Madhhab* of the *Salaf*, that is the *Madhhab* of *Ahlul-Hadīth*.”

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1. Intentions, Sincere Worship and Actions

‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) narrated that Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ لِدُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ امْرَأَةٍ يَتَزَوَّجُهَا فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ

“Actions are only by intentions, and for each person there is only that which he intended. So, whoever’s migration was to Allāh and His Messenger, then his migration was to Allāh and His Messenger—but whoever’s migration was to attain a worldly possession, or for a woman he wanted to marry, then his migration is for that for which he migrated.”¹

Explanation:

A person, in every affair, is required to make his intention pure and sincere for Allah, otherwise, the action is not accepted. If a legislated act of worship is done to show off and impress others, then it is not accepted and is

¹ This wording is reported by Abu Dawūd, no. 2201, see al-Bukhārī, nos. 1 and 6689, Muslim, no. 1907.

considered ‘the lesser polytheism’ or *ash-shirk al-aṣḡhar*. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) stated:

إِنَّ أَخْوَفَ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ الشِّرْكَ الْأَصْغَرَ: الرِّيَاءُ

“The affair that I fear most for you is the lesser polytheism: it is showing off [your good deeds].”²

This showing off can enter into any one of our deeds that should be done only for Allah, such as Prayer, *Sadaqah*, giving *da‘wah*, etc.

Allah rejects any deed wherein partners are associated with Him: where a person seeks fame, praise, and recognition from the creation. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) stated:

قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى أَنَا أَغْنَى الشُّرَكَاءِ عَنِ الشِّرْكِ مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا أَشْرَكَ فِيهِ مَعِيَ غَيْرِي تَرَكْتُهُ وَشِرْكُهُ

Allah, the Blessed and the Most High, said: **“I am One who does not have any need of a partner. If anyone does anything in which he associates anyone else with Me, I shall abandon him along with the one whom he associates with Me.”³**

The Religion is solely for Allah, and our deeds must be directed toward Him, seeking His pleasure and His reward.

Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) said:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

“Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam.”⁴ And He (the Most High) said:

² Reported by Ahmad with a good chain of narration, 5/428-429.

³ Muslim, no. 2985.

⁴ *Aali ‘Imrān*: 20

فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ ﴿٢﴾
أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ^٥

“So, worship Allah alone by doing religious deeds sincerely for Allah’s sake. Surely the religion is purely for Allah.”⁵

The intention as it relates to one’s deeds comes under two headings:

Firstly: To distinguish between individual acts of worship such as whether one is praying *Dhuhr* or *‘Asr*, whether one is fasting an obligatory fast or a recommended fast, whether one is taking a shower to cool down from the heat of the day or a *ghusl* from sexual relations, etc.

Secondly: To distinguish the intent behind the deed. Is it solely for Allah, or is it shared with others along with Him, i.e., to impress those watching or listening? If it was done to impress others, then that deed is not accepted by Allah.

So, the deeds of a person are not accepted unless they are sincere for Allah and in accordance with the *Sunnah* of Allah’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

Allah’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ النَّاسِ يُفْضَى يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَيْهِ رَجُلٌ اسْتَشْهَدَ فَأُتِيَ بِهِ فَعَرَفَهُ نِعْمَهُ فَعَرَفَهَا
قَالَ فَمَا عَمِلْتَ فِيهَا قَالَ قَاتَلْتُ فِيكَ حَتَّى اسْتَشْهَدْتُ . قَالَ كَذَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّكَ قَاتَلْتَ
لَأَنَّ يُقَالَ جَرِيءٌ . فَقَدْ قِيلَ . ثُمَّ أُمِرَ بِهِ فَسُحِبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ حَتَّى أُلْقِيَ فِي النَّارِ وَرَجُلٌ
تَعَلَّمَ الْعِلْمَ وَعَلَّمَهُ وَقَرَأَ الْقُرْآنَ فَأُتِيَ بِهِ فَعَرَفَهُ نِعْمَهُ فَعَرَفَهَا قَالَ فَمَا عَمِلْتَ فِيهَا قَالَ
تَعَلَّمْتُ الْعِلْمَ وَعَلَّمْتُهُ وَقَرَأْتُ فِيكَ الْقُرْآنَ . قَالَ كَذَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّكَ تَعَلَّمْتَ الْعِلْمَ لِيُقَالَ
عَالِمٌ . وَقَرَأْتُ الْقُرْآنَ لِيُقَالَ هُوَ قَارِئٌ . فَقَدْ قِيلَ ثُمَّ أُمِرَ بِهِ فَسُحِبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ حَتَّى

⁵ Al-Zumar: 2-3.

الَّتِي فِي النَّارِ . وَرَجُلٌ وَسَّعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَعْطَاهُ مِنْ أَصْنَافِ الْمَالِ كُلِّهِ فَأُتِيَ بِهِ فَعَرَّفَهُ
 نِعْمَهُ فَعَرَفَهَا قَالَ فَمَا عَمِلْتَ فِيهَا قَالَ مَا تَرَكْتُ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ تُحِبُّ أَنْ يُنْفَقَ فِيهَا إِلَّا
 أَنْفَقْتُ فِيهَا لَكَ قَالَ كَذَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّكَ فَعَلْتَ لِيُقَالَ هُوَ جَوَادٌ . فَقَدْ قِيلَ ثُمَّ أُمِرَ بِهِ
 فَسُحِبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ ثُمَّ أُلْقِيَ فِي النَّارِ

“The first of men who will be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who died as a martyr. He shall be brought forth. Allah will make him recount His blessings which He had bestowed upon him, so he will recount them and admit them. Then Allah will say, **‘What did you do with these blessings?’** He will say, **‘I fought for Your cause until I died as a martyr.’** Allah will say, **‘You have lied. You fought so that you might be called a brave warrior. And you were called so.’** Then the order will be passed against him, and he will be dragged on his face and cast into the Fire.

Then a man will be brought forth who acquired knowledge and imparted it to others and recited the Qur’an. Allah will make him recount His blessings so he will recount them and admit them. Then Allah will say, **‘What did you do with these blessings?’** He will respond, **‘I acquired knowledge and disseminated it and recited the Qur’an seeking Your pleasure.’** Allah will say, **‘You have lied. You acquired knowledge so that you might be called a scholar, and you recited the Qur’an so that it may be said, ‘He is a qari’ (a reciter) and it was said.’** Then the order will be passed against him and he shall be dragged on his face and cast into the Fire.

Then a man will be brought whom Allah had made abundantly rich and had granted every kind of wealth. He will be brought forth, and Allah will make him recount His blessings and he will recount them and admit to them. Then Allah will ask him, **‘What have you done with these blessings?’** He will say, **‘I spent money in every cause which You wished that it should be spent.’** Allah will say to him, **‘You are lying. You did it so that it could be said about you, ‘He is generous and giving’ and it was said.’** Then will

Allah pass His order, and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into the Fire.”⁶ When Mu‘āwiyah (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) heard this narration, he wept.

These three men acted in accordance with the *Shari‘ah* and *Sunnah*, yet they will be cast into the Fire because their intentions for these righteous deeds were not for Allah but instead for the praise of the people and their recognition, *wallāhul-musta‘ān!*

Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 752 H رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) stated in *Madārij as-Sālikeen Bayna Manāzili Iyāka Na‘bdu wa Iyyāka Nasta‘een* (pp. 105-16): “A person does not truly establish the requirements of

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ

‘Only You do we worship’ except by two mighty fundamentals:

The first of them is: to follow the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

The second: sincerity of worship for the One deserving of worship (*al-Ma‘būd*).

With this, one actualises, **‘Only You do we worship’**. And the people with respect to these two fundamentals are divided into four categories:

The first: the people who are sincere to the One deserving of worship (Allah) and they follow the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ)... All of their deeds are for Allah, their speech is for Allah, whatever they give is for Allah, whatever they withhold is done for Allah, they love for Allah, they hate for Allah—their interactions and dealings with the people, apparent and hidden, are done for the Face of Allah alone. They do not desire from the people for any of that any reward, or wages or thanks—they do not desire any position among them, nor do they seek any praise from them, nor any status in their hearts...

⁶ Muslim, no. 1905.

The second: the one who has no sincerity, and he does not follow the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). So, his deeds are not in accordance with the *Shari‘ah*, nor are they done sincerely for Allah such as the deeds that are beautified to show-off to the people who are looking at them doing that which is not legislated by Allah or His Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). They are the most wicked of people and most detested by Allah, the Mighty and Majestic... This group is large among those who ascribe themselves to knowledge, to poverty and worship, in opposition to the **Straight Path**. So, they are the ones who fall into innovations, misguidance, and desiring to be seen (*riyā’*) and heard (*sum‘ah*)—they love to be praised for what which they do not possess of following the *Sunnah*, nor *ikhlaṣ* and knowledge. So, they are people who deserve Allah’s Anger, and they are the people of misguidance.

The third kind: is the one who is sincere in his deeds, but he does not follow the *Sunnah*—these are like the ignorant worshippers and those who ascribe themselves to the path of abstention from the world (*zuhd*) and to poverty—and [also] anyone who worships Allah in way that is not according to His command, and he believes that this worship of his is a form of nearness to Allah, and this is his state, such as the one who thinks that whistling and clapping is a form of nearness to Allah, and the seclusion and isolation wherein he abandons the *jumu‘ah* Prayer and *jamā‘ah* Prayer is a form a nearness to Allah, or fasting day and night without eating at all is a form of nearness to Allah—or fasting on the day people celebrate ‘Eid is a form of nearness, and so on.

The fourth is: the one whose deeds are in accordance to the commandments [of the *Qur’ān* and *Sunnah*] but they are not performed for Allah such as performing deeds of obedience for those watching him, like a man who fights to show off with zeal and bravery so that is what is said about him—and the one who recites the *Qur’ān* so that it is said about that he is a *qārī*. The apparent outward deeds of these of these people are pious and have been legislated, however they are not [really] pious and are not accepted:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

‘And they were not commanded except to worship Allāh, [being] sincere to Him in religion.’⁷

So, each person has not been commanded except with the worship of Allah in the manner legislated, and with sincerity purely for Allah in worship, and they are the purely in the fulfillment of the saying of Allah:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾

‘You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help.’⁸ (End)

Abu ‘Ubaid (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) said regarding the *ḥadīth* of actions are only by intentions, “There is no narration of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) more comprehensive, rich and plentiful in benefit than this *ḥadīth*.”⁹

‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Mahdī said about this *ḥadīth*, “Whoever wishes to author a book, let him begin with this *ḥadīth*.”¹⁰

In conclusion, it is a must that the caller to Allah is sincere in his *da‘wah*, seeking only the reward from Allah. He does not shy away from speaking the truth with honesty, wisdom and good admonition seeking the rectification of the people so that they may turn to Allah in worship and obedience. It is not flattery and glory that he seeks, nor wealth, adoration, followers, and fame. This is what has broken the back of so many throughout the ages. We ask Allah for safety and well-being.

⁷ *Al-Bayyinah*: 5.

⁸ *Al-Fātihah*: 4.

⁹ *Muntahā al-Āmāl of al-Suyūṭī*, p. 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 43.