

The Merit of Islam

Imām Muhammad ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhāb

The Merit of Islam

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Allah Almighty says: {Anyone who seeks a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted from him; and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers.} ¹ [Surat Āl ‘Imrān: 85] He Almighty also says: {This is My straight path; follow it and do not follow other ways, lest they lead you away from His way. This is what He commands you, so that you may become righteous.} ² [Surat al-An‘ām: 153]

Mujāhid said: “The phrase ‘other ways’ refers to the religious innovations and misconceptions.”

‘Ā’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Anyone who innovates something in this matter of ours [Islam] that is not part of it will have it rejected.” ³ In another version: “Whoever does any action that is not a part of this matter of ours [Islam] will have it rejected.” ⁴

In another Hadīth, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Everyone of my Ummah will enter Paradise except those who refuse.” It was said: “Who would refuse, O Messenger of Allah?” He said: “He who obeys me shall enter Paradise, and he who disobeys me has indeed refused.” ⁵

As narrated in the Sahīh (authentic) collection, ibn ‘Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “The most hateful people to Allah are of three types: he who deviates in the Sacred Mosque; he who seeks to introduce into Islam something typical of the Jāhiliyyah (pre-Islamic period); and he who unjustly seeks to shed somebody’s blood without any right.” ⁶ [Narrated by Al-Bukhārī] The word “Jāhiliyyah” is applicable to any general or specific conduct of certain individuals; be

¹ Surat Āl ‘Imrān: 85]

² Surat al-An‘ām: 153]

³ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī (2550), Muslim (1718), Abu Dāwūd (4606), Ibn Mājah (14), and Ahmad (6/256)]

⁴ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī (2550), Muslim (1718), Abu Dāwūd (4606), Ibn Mājah (14), and Ahmad (6/256)]

⁵ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī (6851), Muslim (1835), and Ahmad (2/361)]

⁶ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī (6488)]

that part of Christianity, Judaism, Paganism, or anything else that contradicts what the messengers preached.

As narrated in the Sahīh collection, Hudhayfah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "Be straightforward, O community of reciters, for you have gone far ahead of others. And so, if you deviated right or left, you have gone far astray."

It is reported that Muhammad ibn Waddāh would enter the mosque and stand at the circles of learning and deliver a short sermon. He once said: "Ibn 'Uyaynah related to us from Mujāhid from Ash-Sha'bi from Masrūq that 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd said: 'Every year is certainly followed by a worse one. I do not mean that a year is more prosperous than another nor a leader is better than another. Rather, I am referring to the passing of your scholars and most pious people. Then, there emerge people who evaluate things based on their own opinions, and so Islam will be ruined and broken.'"

Chapter: What is Islam?

Allah Almighty says: {Then if they argue with you, say, "I have submitted myself to Allah, and so have those who follow me."} ⁷ [Surat Āl 'Imrān: 20]

As narrated in the Sahīh collection, ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Islam is to testify that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, perform prayers, pay Zakah, fast the month of Ramadan, and perform Hajj to the Sacred House if you have the means for that." ⁸

In another relevant Hadīth, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "A Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand Muslims are safe." ⁹

Bahz ibn Hakīm reported from his father from his grandfather that he asked the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) about Islam, and he replied: "To submit your heart to Allah, turn your face to Allah, perform the obligatory prayers, and pay Zakah." ¹⁰ [Narrated by Ahmad]

⁷ Surat Āl 'Imrān: 20]

⁸ Narrated by Muslim (8), At-Tirmidhi (2610), An-Nasā'i (4990), Abu Dāwūd (4695), Ibn Mājah (63), and Ahmad (1/52)]

⁹ Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (2627), An-Nasā'i (4995), and Ahmad (2/379)]

¹⁰ Narrated by Ahmad (5/3) and An-Nasā'i (2436)]

Abu Qilābah reported from ‘Amr ibn ‘Absah from a man in the Levant from his father that he asked the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him): “What is Islam?” He replied: ‘It is to submit your heart to Allah, and from your tongue and hand Muslims be safe.’ He asked: ‘Which Islam is best?’ He said: ‘Faith.’ He asked: ‘What is faith?’ He said: ‘It is to believe in Allah and His angels, His Scriptures, His messengers, and resurrection after death.’¹¹

Chapter: Allah Almighty says: {Anyone who seeks a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted from him.}

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Deeds will come on the Day of Judgment, and prayer will come and say: ‘O Lord, I am the prayer!’ He will say: ‘You are good.’ Then, fasting will come, and He will say: ‘You are good.’ Then, the other deeds will come, and He will say: ‘You are good.’ And then Islam will come and say: ‘O Lord, I am the peace, I am Islam.’ And He will say: ‘You are good. Through you today I will reward and through you I will punish.’ Allah Almighty says: {Anyone who seeks a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted from him; and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers.}¹² [Surat Āl ‘Imrān: 85] [Narrated by Ahmad:]

As narrated in the Sahīh collection, ‘Ā’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Whoever does any action that is not a part of this matter of ours [Islam] will have it rejected.”¹³ [Narrated by Ahmad]

Chapter: The obligation to solely rely on following none but the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him).

Allah Almighty says: {We have sent down to you the Book as an explanation of everything.}¹⁴ [Surat an-Nahl: 89]

¹¹ Narrated by Ahmad (4/114)]

¹² Surat Āl ‘Imrān: 85]

¹³ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī (2550), Muslim (1718), Abu Dāwūd (4606), Ibn Mājah (14), and Ahmad (6/256)]

¹⁴ Surat an-Nahl: 89]

As narrated by An-Nasā'ī and others, it is reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) saw in 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb's hand a paper from the Torah. He said: "If Mūsa (Moses) were alive, he could not help but follow me." ¹⁵ Thereupon, 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "I am pleased with Allah as a Lord, with Islam as a religion, and with Muhammad as a Prophet."

Chapter: The textual evidence regarding violating the call of Islam

Allah Almighty says: He named you as Muslims earlier and in this [Qur'an].} ¹⁶ [Surat al-Hajj: 78]

Al-Hārith al-Ash'arī (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I command you with five that Allah commanded me: Listening and obeying, Jihad, Hijrah (migration), and adhering to the Jamā'ah (Muslim community). For indeed whoever parts from the Muslim community the measure of a hand-span has indeed cast off the yoke of Islam from his neck, unless he returns. And whoever makes the call of jāhiliyyah is from the coals of Hell." A man said: 'O Messenger of Allah, even if he prays and fasts?' He (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: 'Even if he prays and fasts. So, servants of Allah, invoke Allah Who named you the Muslims and the believers.' ¹⁷ [Narrated by Ahmad and At-Tirmidhi who classified it as Hasan (Sound) and Sahīh (authentic)]

As narrated in the Sahīh collection, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever parts ways with the Muslim community the measure of a hand-span dies a death of Jāhiliyyah." ¹⁸ A closely related Hadīth states: "Is there the call of Jāhiliyyah while I am still alive among you?!" Abu al-'Abbās said: "Anything that is alien to the call of Islam and the Qur'an - be it lineage, nationality, race, doctrine, or an order - is attributed to the jāhiliyyah. When a Muhājir and an Ansāri were locked in a dispute, and each of them called on his tribe for support, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Is there the call of jāhiliyyah while I am still alive among you?!" And he was so angry because of that."

¹⁵ Narrated by Ahmad (3/387) and Ad-Dārimi (435)]

¹⁶ Surat al-Hajj: 78]

¹⁷ Narrated by Ahmad (4/130) and At-Tirmidhi (2863)]

¹⁸ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri (6646), Muslim (1849), Ahmad (1/297), and Ad-Dārimi (2519)].

Chapter: The obligation to wholly embrace Islam entirely and abandon everything else

Allah Almighty says: {O you who believe, enter into Islam completely.} ¹⁹ [Surat al-Baqarah: 208] He Almighty also says: {Have you not seen [O Prophet] those who claim that they believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you.} ²⁰ [Surat an-Nisā': 60] He Almighty also says: {On the Day [some] faces will turn white and [some] faces will turn black.} ²¹ [Surat Āl 'Imrān: 106] Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "The faces of the people of the Sunnah and unity will turn white, and the faces of the people of religious innovations and disunity will turn black."

'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "What befell the Children of Israel will befall my Ummah, step by step, such that even if there were someone who had intercourse with his mother in public, then there would be someone from my Ummah who would do that. Indeed the children of Israel split into seventy-two sects." ²² The rest of the Hadīth is as follows: "My Ummah will split into seventy-three sects, all of whom will be in Hellfire except for one." They said: 'Who is it, O Messenger of Allah?' He said: '[Those who follow] what I and my Companions are upon.' ²³ What a great admonition that sits well with an attentive heart! At-Tirmidhi narrated the above Hadīth. It was also narrated by Ahmad and Abu Dāwūd from the Hadīth of Mu'āwiyah where the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "There will appear among my Ummah some people who will be dominated by desires like rabies which penetrates its patient. There remains no vein or joint but it penetrates it." [Narrated by At-Tirmidhi, Ahmad, and Abu Dāwūd] We have cited above the Prophet's statement: "He who wants to introduce into Islam the way of the jāhiliyyah."

Chapter: The textual evidence indicating that religious innovation is graver than major sins

¹⁹ Surat al-Baqarah: 208]

²⁰ Surat an-Nisā': 60]

²¹ Surat Āl 'Imrān: 106]

²² Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (2641)]

²³ Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (2641)]

based on the saying of Allah Almighty: {Allah does not forgive associating partners with Him, but forgives anything less than that for whom He wills.} ²⁴ [Surat an-Nisā': 48] Allah Almighty also says: {They will bear their burdens in full on the Day of Resurrection and some burdens of those whom they misled without knowledge. How terrible is what they will bear!} ²⁵ [Surat an-Nahl: 25]

As narrated in the Sahīh collection, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said with regard to the Kharijites: "Wherever you find them, kill them." ²⁶

On the same subject, it is also reported that he (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) forbade the killing of unjust rulers so long as they offer the prayer.

Jarīr reported from 'Abdullāh that a man gave charity and then people began to follow suit; thereupon, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever introduces a good practice in Islam, there is for him its reward and the reward of those who act upon it after him without anything being diminished from their rewards. And whoever introduces an evil practice in Islam will shoulder its sin and the sins of all those who will act upon it, without diminishing anything of their burden" ²⁷ [Narrated Muslim]

He also reported from Abu Hurayrah a Hadīth that reads: "Whosoever calls to guidance - and then he said - and whosoever calls to misguidance." ²⁸

Chapter: The textual evidence indicating that Allah withholds repentance from religious innovators

This is one of the Hadīths reported by Anas, as part of the Marasīl (reports where the Companion's name is dropped) of Al-Hasan.

Ibn Waddāh mentioned that Ayyūb reported: "There was a man with us who had adopted a [deviant] ideology but then abandoned it. I went to Muhammad ibn Sirīn and said: 'Have you noticed that so-and-so abandoned his view?' He said: 'Behold!

²⁴ Surat an-Nisā': 48]

²⁵ Surat an-Nahl: 25]

²⁶ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri (3415), Muslim (1066), An-Nasā'i (4102), Abu Dāwūd (4767), and Ahmad (1/131)]

²⁷ Narrated Muslim (1017), At-Tirmidhi (2675), An-Nasā'i (2554), Ibn Mājah (203), Ahmad (4/359), and Ad-Dārimi (514)]

²⁸ Narrated by Muslim (2674), At-Tirmidhi (2674), Abu Dāwūd (4609), Ahmad (2/397), and Ad-Dārimi (513)]

The latter part of the Hadīth causes them greater unease than its beginning: 'They go out of Islam and do not return to it.'" ²⁹ Ahmad ibn Hanbal was asked about the meaning of this, and he said: "He is not granted assistance to repent."

Chapter: Allah Almighty says: {O People of the Book, why do you dispute about Abraham.}

Allah Almighty says: {O People of the Scripture, why do you argue about Abraham;} ³⁰ [Surat Āl 'Imrān: 65] until His Almighty saying: {and he was not one of the polytheists.} ³¹ [Surat Āl 'Imrān: 67] Allah Almighty says: {Who would forsake the religion of Abraham except a fool! We have chosen him in this world, and in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous.} ³² [Surat Al-Baqarah: 130] Relevant to this topic is the above-cited Hadīth on the Kharijites, in which the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "The family of the father of so-and-so are not my friends. Indeed, my friends are the pious." ³³ One further Hadīth on the subject is reported by Anas where the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was informed that one of the Companions said: "As for me, I will not eat meat.' And another said: 'As for me, I will stand up in prayer and do not sleep.' And another one said: 'As for me, I will observe fast and not break it.' Thereupon, the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: 'But I stand (in prayer) and sleep, fast and break the fast, marry women, and eat meat. So, whoever abandons my Sunnah does not belong to me.'" ³⁴ This observation should be carefully considered! If some of the Companions wanted to be entirely devoted to worship and, as a result, they heard such harsh rebuke and their acts were regarded as a renouncement of the Sunnah, then how severe the case would be for religious innovation and others who are not the Companions!

Chapter: Allah Almighty says: {Adhere sincerely to the true religion in all uprightness.}

²⁹ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī (6995), Muslim (1064), An-Nasā'i (2578), Abu Dāwūd (4764), and Ahmad (3/68)]

³⁰ Surat Āl 'Imrān: 65]

³¹ Surat Āl 'Imrān: 67]

³² Surat al-Baqarah: 130]

³³ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī (5644), Muslim (215), and Ahmad (4/203)]

³⁴ Narrated by Al-Bukhārī (4776), Muslim (1401), An-Nasā'i (3217), and Ahmad (3/285)]

Allah Almighty says: {Adhere sincerely to the true religion in all uprightness. This is the natural disposition with which Allah has created mankind. There is no change in Allah's creation. This is the straight religion, but most people do not know.} ³⁵ [Surat ar-Rūm: 30]

Allah Almighty says: {This was enjoined by Abraham and Jacob to their offspring, "O my children, Allah has chosen for you this religion; so do not die except as Muslims."} ³⁶ [Surat al-Baqarah: 132] Allah Almighty says: {Then We revealed to you [O Prophet] to follow the religion of Abraham, inclining to true faith, and he was not one of those who associate partners with Allah.} ³⁷ [Surat an-Nahl: 123]

Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Every prophet has allies among the prophets, and my ally among them is my father Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and the friend of my Lord." ³⁸ Then he recited: {The closest people to Abraham are those who followed him, and this Prophet and those who believe. And Allah is the Guardian of the believers.} ³⁹ [Surat Āl 'Imrān: 68] [Narrated by At-Tirmidhi]

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Allah does not look at your bodies or at your forms, but He looks at your hearts and deeds." ⁴⁰

As narrated in both Sahīh collections of Al-Bukhāri and Muslim, Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I am your predecessor at the Hawd (Cistern) and some men amongst you will be brought to me, and when I try to hand them some water, they will be pulled away from me by force; whereupon I will say: 'O Lord, my companions!' Then, it will be said: 'You do not know the new religious innovations they introduced after you.'" ⁴¹

³⁵ Surat ar-Rūm: 30]

³⁶ Surat al-Baqarah: 132]

³⁷ Surat an-Nahl: 123]

³⁸ Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (2995) and Ahmad (1/430)]

³⁹ Surat Āl 'Imrān: 68]

⁴⁰ Narrated by Muslim (2564)]

⁴¹ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri (6642), Muslim (2297), Ibn Mājah (3057), and Ahmad (5/393)]

Both Al-Bukhāri and Muslim have also narrated a Hadīth by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) who reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I wish to see my brothers." They said: 'Are we not your brothers, O Messenger of Allah?' He said: 'You are my Companions, and our brothers are those who have not yet come into the world.' They said: 'O Messenger of Allah, how will you recognize those persons of your Ummah who have not yet been born?' He said: 'Suppose a man had horses with white blazes on the foreheads and legs among horses which were all black; tell me, would he not recognize his own horses?' They said: 'Certainly, O Messenger of Allah.' He said: 'They will come with white faces and arms and legs owing to ablution, and I will arrive at the Cistern before them. Some people will be driven away from my Cistern as the stray camel is driven away. I will call out: 'Come, come.' Then it will be said: 'These people changed themselves after you.' So, I will say: 'Be off, be off.'" ⁴²

In another Hadīth narrated by Al-Bukhār, he (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "While I was sleeping, a group (of my followers were brought close to me), and when I recognized them, a man came out from amongst me and them and said (to them): 'Come along.' I asked: 'Where?' He said: 'To Hell-fire, by Allah!' I asked: 'What is wrong with them?' He said: 'They turned apostates and renegades after you left.' Then, behold! Another group was brought close to me (and he related the same occurrence and said). So I did not see anyone of them escaping except a few who were like camels without a shepherd." ⁴³

In another Hadīth narrated by both Al-Bukhāri and Muslim, Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported: "Thereupon, I will say as the righteous servant said: {I was a witness over them as long as I was among them. But when You took me up, You Yourself were Watcher over them, and You are a Witness over all things.} ⁴⁴ [Surat al-Mā'idah: 117]

Both Al-Bukhāri and Muslim narrated yet another Hadīth by Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him) who reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "There is no child but he is born upon the Fitrah (natural disposition). It is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian, quite as beasts produce their young with their limbs perfect. Do you see anything deficient in them unless you make them deficient?" ⁴⁵ Then, Abu Hurayrah

⁴² Narrated by Al-Bukhāri (2238), Muslim (249), An-Nasā'i (150), Abu Dāwūd (3237), Ibn Mājah (4306), Ahmad (2/300), and Mālik (60)]

⁴³ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri (6215)]

⁴⁴ Surat al-Mā'idah: 117]

⁴⁵ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri (1292), Muslim (2658), At-Tirmidhi (2138), Abu Dāwūd (4714), Ahmad (2/315), and Mālik (569)]

(may Allah be pleased with him) recited: {This is the natural disposition with which Allah has created mankind.} ⁴⁶ [Surat ar-Rūm: 30] [Narrated by Al-Bukhāri and Muslim]

Hudhayfah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The people used to ask the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) about good, but I used to ask him about evil for fear that it might overtake me. Once I said: "O Messenger of Allah, we were in ignorance and in evil and Allah has bestowed upon us the present good; will there be any evil after this good?" He said: 'Yes.' I asked: 'Will there be good after that evil?' He said: 'Yes, but it will be tainted with minor evil.' I asked: 'What will its minor evil be?' He said: 'There will be some people who will lead (people) according to principles other than my Sunnah. You will see their actions and disapprove of them.' I said: 'Will there be any evil after that good?' He said: 'Yes, there will be some people who will invite others to the doors of Hell, and whoever accepts their invitation to it will be thrown in it.' I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, describe those people to us.' He said: 'They will belong to us and speak our language.' I asked: "What do you order me to do if such a thing should take place in my life?" He said: 'Adhere to the community of Muslims and their ruler.' I asked: 'If there is neither a community nor a ruler?' He said: 'Keep away from all those different sects, even if you have to bite the root of a tree, till you meet Allah while you are still in that state.' ⁴⁷ Both Al-Bukhāri and Muslim narrated it but the version of Muslim has the following addition: "What will come next?" He replied: 'Then the Anti-Christ will come forth accompanied by a river and a fire. He who falls into his fire will certainly receive his reward.' I then asked: 'What will come next?' He said: 'The Last Hour will come.' ⁴⁸ Abu al-ʿĀliyah said: "Learn Islam, and when you learn it, do not abandon it. Adhere to the straight path, for this is Islam, and do not swerve from the path to the right or to the left. And hold onto the Sunnah of your Prophet and beware of these deviant desires." End quote.

Consider these insightful words by Abu al-ʿĀliyah, learn about the era in which he warned of such deviant desires that may lead one to be averse to Islam, reflect on how he explains Islam within the parameters of the Sunnah, and his fear for the prominent figures and scholars among the Successors that they might abandon the Sunnah and the Qur'an. Once you have internalized this, you will see clearly the meaning of Allah Almighty's saying: {When his Lord said to him, "Submit".} ⁴⁹ [Surat

⁴⁶ Surat ar-Rūm: 30]

⁴⁷ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri (3411), Muslim (1847), Abu Dāwūd (4244), Ibn Mājah (3979), and Ahmad (5/387)]

⁴⁸ Narrated by Al-Bukhāri (3411), Muslim (1847), Abu Dāwūd (4244), Ibn Mājah (3979), and Ahmad (5/404)]

⁴⁹ Surat al-Baqarah: 131]

al-Baqarah: 131] And His other saying: {This was enjoined by Abraham and Jacob to their offspring, "O my children, Allah has chosen for you this religion; so do not die except as Muslims."} ⁵⁰ [Surat al-Baqarah: 132] And His other saying: {Who would forsake the religion of Abraham except a fool!} ⁵¹ [Surat al-Baqarah: 130] You will also be able to clearly understand fundamental principles similar to the above-mentioned, of which people are unfortunately heedless. By learning this, the meaning of the Hadīths in this chapter and similar ones becomes clear. A person who reads those and other similar Hadīths, believing they do not apply to oneself and thinking that they only address certain people who had felt secure from the plots of Allah, such person is indeed one of the losers who feel secure from the plots of Allah.

Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) drew a line for us and said: "This is the path of Allah." Then he drew several lines on his right and left and said: 'These are paths on each of which there is a devil who invites people to follow it.' And he recited: {This is My straight path; follow it and do not follow other ways, lest they lead you away from His way.} ⁵² [Surat al-An'ām: 153] [Narrated by Ahmad and An-Nasā'i]

Chapter: The textual evidence regarding the strangeness of Islam and the merit of strangers

Allah Almighty says: {If only there had been among the generations before you righteous people who would forbid others from spreading corruption in the land, except a few of them whom We saved.} ⁵³ [Surat Hūd: 116] Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Islam began as something strange and will go back to being strange; so glad tidings to the strangers." [Narrated by Muslim] Ahmad also narrated this Hadīth though it was reported by Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him). It reads: "Who are the strangers?" He said: 'Those who turn away from the tribes and remain good when people become corrupt.' ^{54,55}

⁵⁰ Surat al-Baqarah: 132]

⁵¹ Surat al-Baqarah: 130]

⁵² Surat al-An'ām: 153]

⁵³ Surat Hūd: 116]

⁵⁴ Narrated by Muslim (145), Ibn Mājah (3986), and Ahmad (2/389)]

⁵⁵ Narrated by Ahmad (4/74)]

In another Hadīth reported by Kathīr ibn ‘Abdullāh from his father from his grandfather: “So, blessed are the strangers who reform what people corrupt in my Sunnah.”⁵⁶

Abu Umayyah related: I asked Abu Tha‘labah about his opinion regarding the meaning of the following verse: {O you who believe, take care of your own selves. Those who have gone astray will not harm you as long as you are guided.} ⁵⁷ [Surat al-Mā'idah: 105] He said: “Indeed, by Allah, I asked a well-informed one about it. I asked the Messenger of Allah (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) about it, and he said: ‘Rather, command what is right and forbid what is wrong, until you see avarice embraced, desires followed, and the worldly life preferred, and everyone admiring his own view. Then you should be concerned about yourself and have no concern about the common folk. Ahead of you are the days in which patience is like holding onto an ember, for the doer (of righteous deeds) during them is like of the reward of fifty of those who do the like of what you do.’ It was said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, the reward of fifty men among us, or them?’ He said: ‘No, the reward of fifty men among you!’” ⁵⁸ [Narrated by Abu Dāwūd, At-Tirmidhi]

Ibn Waddāh related a similar Hadīth reported by Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). The Hadīth reads: “After your era, there will come days in which the one patiently holding onto his religion as you do today will have the reward of fifty persons among you.” ⁵⁹ He then reported another Hadīth: Muhammad ibn Sa‘īd related from Asad from Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah from Al-Basri from Sa‘īd, Hasan’s brother, a hadith that reads: “Today, you have a clear understanding of what your Lord requires you to do. You command the right, forbid the wrong, and engage in Jihad in the cause of Allah. So far, the two agonies have not emerged among you: the agony of ignorance and the agony of loving to live long. However, things will change afterwards and then anyone holding fast to the Qur’an and the Sunnah will be granted the reward of fifty persons.’ It was said: ‘From among them?’ He said: ‘No, from among you.” Ibn Waddāh narrated another Hadīth on the authority of al-Mu‘āfiri who reported that the Prophet (may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) said: “Blessed are the strangers, who hold onto the Qur’an when it is abandoned and act upon the Sunnah when it vanishes.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (2630)]

⁵⁷ Surat al-Mā'idah: 105]

⁵⁸ Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (3058) and Ibn Mājah (4014)]

⁵⁹ Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (3058) and Ibn Mājah (4014)

⁶⁰ Narrated by Ahmad (2/222)

Chapter: Warning against religious innovations

Al-'Irbād ibn Sāriyah reported: "The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) gave us an eloquent admonition which caused the eyes to shed tears and the hearts to become afraid. We said: 'This is the admonition of someone who will soon part. What do you charge us with doing?' He (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: 'I advise you to fear Allah and to hear and obey, even if a slave were placed in charge of you. Any of you who live after me will witness major differences. You should hold fast to my Sunnah and that of the rightly guided Caliphs. Bite onto it with your molar teeth. Beware of invented matters [with regards to religion], for indeed every religious innovation is misguidance.'" ⁶¹ [Al-Tirmidhi classified this Hadīth as Hasan (sound) Sahīh authentic]]

Hudhayfah said: "Any act of worship not performed by the Prophet's Companions, do not perform it. The former generation have not left anything to be decided by the latter generations (in terms of worship). So, fear Allah, O community of reciters, and follow the path of those who came before you." [Narrated by Abu Dāwūd] Ad-Dārimi narrated: Al-Hakam ibn Mubārak related to us that 'Amr ibn Yahya related: I heard my father relating from his father, saying: "We used to sit at the door of 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd before the Fajr prayer. When he went out, we would walk with him to the mosque. Once Abu Mūsa al-Ash'ari came and asked: 'Has Abu 'Abdur-Rahmān gone out?' We replied in the negative. So, he sat with us, and he went out, he said: 'O Abu 'Abdur-Rahmān, I saw something in the mosque which I consider strange, but I have not seen anything but good.' He said: 'So, what is it?' He said: 'I saw in the mosque people sitting in circles waiting for the prayer. In each circle was there a man and in their hands were pebbles. He would say, 'say Takbīr 'Allah is Most Great' a hundred times', and so they would do so a hundred times; he would say, 'say Tahlīl (there is no God worthy of worship but Allah' a hundred times), and so they would do so a hundred times; and he would say Tasbīh (glorify Allah) a hundred times', and so they would do so a hundred times.' He said: 'So, what did you say to them?' He replied: 'I said nothing to them. I am waiting for your instruction.' He said: 'You should tell them to count their misdeeds and guarantee to them that nothing of their good deeds will be missed.' He went off and reached one of those circles and said: 'What is this?' They replied: 'These are pebbles by which we count our Takbīr, Tahlīl, and Tasbīh.' He said: 'Rather, count your misdeeds and I guarantee to you that nothing of your good deeds will be missed. Woe to you the Ummah of Muhammad, how fast you go to ruin! Here are the Companions of your Prophet available in abundance, and this is his clothing not rotten and his vessels not broken. By the One in Whose Hand my soul is, either you are following a religion more guided than that of Muhammad or you are opening a door of

⁶¹ Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (2676), Abu Dāwūd (4607), Ibn Mājah (44), Ahmad (4/126), and Ad-Dārimi (95)]

misguidance.' They said: 'By Allah, O Abu 'Abdur-Rahmān, we intended nothing but good.' He said: 'How often a person intends good but cannot reach it. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) informed us that some people would recite the Qur'an but it would not go past their throats. By Allah, most of them are most probably from among you." 'Amr ibn Salamah reported: We saw most of those people fighting against us during the battle of Nahrawān along with the Kharijites.