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(1703–1792 C.E., 1115–1206 A.H.) May Allah have mercy on him.

Usool ath-Thalatha means The Three Fundamental Principles. This short matn teaches us about Allah, Islam and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It teaches why Allah created us, how to worship Him alone and how to follow the Qur'an and Sunnah. Its three principles are knowing our Lord, knowing our religion and knowing our Prophet ﷺ. These lessons are taught upon The Qur'aan & Sunnah as Understood by the Salaf (Pious Predecessors) of this Ummah.

Introduction to Tawheed

Tawheed means singling out Allah alone in everything that belongs only to Him. Its Arabic root is وحد. Allah created people and jinn to worship Him alone. Tawheed is the greatest knowledge and is a cause of guidance, safety, peace, forgiveness, greater reward and entering Jannah by Allah's mercy. (Surah Adh-Dhariyat 51:56)

Three Categories of Tawheed

Tawheed of Lordship means Allah alone creates, provides, gives life and death and controls everything. Tawheed of Worship means praying, making Dua and directing all worship to Allah alone. Tawheed of Names and Attributes means believing in the beautiful Names and perfect Attributes of Allah taught in the Qur'an and Sunnah, such as Ar-Rahman, the Most Merciful and As-Sami, the All-Hearing. The scholars organized these teachings into three categories to explain the message of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Tawheed in the Qur'an

Ibn al-Qayyim explained that the Qur'an teaches us about Allah and His Names and Attributes, calls us to worship Allah alone, gives commands and prohibitions, tells us about the reward of people who obey Allah and warns us about Shirk and its punishment. (Madaarij As-Salikeen, Vol. 3, p. 450) The words Ahad and Wahid teach that Allah is One. The sons of Yaqub said that they worship one God. Allah also says He is one God and warns against saying Allah is one of three. (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:133; Surah An-Nahl 16:51; Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:73) Ibn Kathir and At-Tabari explained that Allah alone is our Lord and the One deserving worship. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir; Jami al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an)

Tawheed in the Sunnah and the Understanding of the Salaf

The Sunnah includes what Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, did, approved of and his qualities. When he sent Muadh ibn Jabal to Yemen, he told him to call people first to Tawheed. The Hadith on the five pillars begins with worshipping Allah alone and the testimony of faith. (Bukhari; Muslim)

The Salaf are the Companions and early Muslim generations. The Prophet ﷺ praised the first three generations. (Bukhari) Jaabir described the Talbiyah in Hajj as declaring Allah has no partner and that all praise, blessings and power belong to Him. (Muslim) The delegation of Abdul-Qays learned that believing in Allah alone includes testifying that He alone deserves worship and Muhammad ﷺ is His Messenger. (Bukhari)



How the Early Scholars Explained Tawheed

Ataa ibn Abi Rabah explained the faith mentioned in Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:5 as Tawheed. (Tafsir At-Tabarani) Imam Ad-Darimi explained Tawheed through Laa ilaaha illa Allah and Muhammadur Rasulullah. (Ar-Radd ala Bishr al-Mirrisi, Vol. 1, p. 152) Imam Al-Ajuri taught that Laa ilaaha illa Allah must be believed with certainty in the heart. (Ash-Shari'ah, Vol. 2, p. 553) Laa ilaaha illa Allah means that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah.

Why Tawheed Matters

Allah created us to worship Him alone. Worship must be sincere and free of Shirk. Tawheed is a cause of Jannah, greater reward, forgiven sins, guidance, security and peace in the heart. With Allah's permission, people of sincere Tawheed may receive the Prophet's ﷺ intercession.

Two Conditions for Correct Worship

The first condition is Ikhlas: every act of worship must be sincerely for Allah alone. The second is following Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: worship must follow his Sunnah. Good intentions do not make an invented act of worship correct. The Prophet ﷺ taught that a deed not in accordance with his guidance is rejected. (Muslim 1718)

Shirk and Its Types

Shirk means giving something that belongs only to Allah to someone or something else. Major Shirk includes directing worship, such as Dua or sacrifice, to other than Allah. It takes a person outside Islam and is the greatest injustice. A person who dies upon it without repentance is not forgiven. Minor Shirk is a serious sin that does not itself take a person out of Islam. Examples include showing off in worship and swearing by other than Allah. Hidden Shirk may be in the heart, such as doing worship to receive praise from people. Prophet Ibrahim asked Allah to keep him and his sons away from worshipping idols. (Surah Ibrahim 14:35) The Prophet ﷺ taught a Dua seeking protection from knowingly committing Shirk and seeking forgiveness for what we do not know. (Ahmad)

Bismillah

Bismillah means "In the Name of Allah." The Qur'an begins with it. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ began letters with it and Prophet Sulayman began his letter with it. Scholars began their writings with Bismillah and we say it seeking Allah's blessings. (Bukhari; Surah An-Naml 27:30) When Bismillah is said before drinking, the understood meaning is "In the Name of Allah, I drink." The Basmalah contains three Names: Allah, the only One worthy of worship; Ar-Rahman, whose mercy is vast; and Ar-Raheem, who gives special mercy to His believing servants. Food, water and rain are among Allah's blessings.



Knowledge and Action

The author begins with a Dua asking Allah to show mercy to the learner. Knowledge means knowing the truth with evidence. Allah's mercy is greater than a mother's mercy for her child. (Tirmidhi 1924; Abu Dawud 4941; Muslim 2752; Bukhari and Muslim) Knowledge comes before words and actions. A Muslim learns the truth, acts upon it, calls to it and is patient. Surah Al-Asr teaches faith, good deeds, advising one another to the truth and patience. (Surah Al-Asr 103:1–3; Surah Muhammad 47:19) Health and free time are two blessings many people waste. (Bukhari 6412)

Calling to Allah and Patience

Dawah needs sincerity, sound knowledge, wisdom, patience and understanding the people being taught. (Surah Yusuf 12:108) Ibn al-Qayyim explained patience in three forms: patience in obeying Allah, patience in avoiding sins and patience with Allah's decree. Imam Al-Bukhari placed a chapter on knowledge coming before speech and action.

Three Important Matters

First, Allah created us, provides for us and sent a Messenger to guide us. Allah does not punish a people until He sends a Messenger and He sent Muhammad ﷺ as mercy to the worlds. (Surah Al-Isra 17:15; Surah Al-Anbiya 21:107)

Second, Allah is not pleased with any created being, even an angel or a Prophet, being worshipped with Him. (Surah Al-Jinn 72:18)

Third, Muslims obey the Messenger ﷺ, reject Shirk and do not take part in false worship. This does not prevent treating other people with fairness and good manners. Prophet Ibrahim rejected idol worship. (Surah Az-Zukhruf 43:26–27)

Haneefiyyah and Sincerity

Haneefiyyah is the religion of Prophet Ibrahim: turning away from Shirk and worshipping Allah alone. (Surah An-Nahl 16:120) Allah created jinn and people for His worship. The greatest command is Tawheed and the greatest prohibition is Shirk. (Surah Adh-Dhariyat 51:56; Surah An-Nisa 4:36)

Surah Al-Fatihah teaches Lordship in “Lord of the worlds,” Allah's Names in “the Most Merciful” and worship in “You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help.” (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:2–5) Ikhlas means being sincere to Allah alone.

The Three Fundamental Principles

The three principles are knowing our Lord, knowing the religion of Islam and knowing Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.



First Principle: Knowing Allah

Allah is our Rabb, our Lord. He made us, cares for us and gives us everything we need. He is Lord of all creation and He alone deserves worship. (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:2) We know Allah from revelation and His signs and creation: night, day, sun, moon, heavens and earth. We worship the Creator, not the things He created. (Surah Fussilat 41:37; Surah Al-A'raf 7:54) Allah created the heavens and earth, sends rain and provides fruit. (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:21–22) Ibn Kathir explained that the Creator deserves worship. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

Acts of Worship

Worship includes everything Allah loves from our words and actions, outwardly and in the heart. Ibn Taymiyyah defined worship this way. Acts include Islam, Iman, Ihsan, Dua, fear of Allah, hope, trust, longing, humility, returning to Allah, seeking His help and protection, sacrifice and vows. These acts must be directed to Allah alone. (Surah Al-Jinn 72:18; Surah Al-Mu'minun 23:117)

Dua

Dua of worship includes every act done to worship Allah. Dua of asking means asking Allah to bring good or remove harm. The Prophet ﷺ said that Dua is worship. (Surah Ghafir 40:60; Tirmidhi 2969; Abu Dawud 1479) It is allowed to ask a living person for ordinary help they can give, such as helping carry something. Matters only Allah controls must be asked of Allah.

Fear, Hope and Trust

Khawf is fear. Normal fear, such as fearing fire or danger, is natural. Fear that leads to disobeying Allah is wrong. Religious fear that is worship belongs only to Allah. Believing a dead or absent person has secret powers to harm is a form of Shirk. Prophet Musa experienced ordinary fear. (Surah Al-Qasas 28:18; Surah Aal Imran 3:175) Rajaa means hoping for Allah's mercy and reward while doing good. (Surah Al-Kahf 18:110) Tawakkul means trusting Allah while using lawful means and making an effort. (Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:23; Surah At-Talaq 65:3)

Other Acts of Worship

Raghabah is a strong hope for Allah's reward. Rahbah is fear that helps us obey Allah. Khushoo means being humble before Allah. (Surah Al-Anbiya 21:90) Khashyah is fear joined with knowledge of Allah's greatness. (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:150) Inaabah means turning back to Allah with repentance and obedience. (Surah Az-Zumar 39:54) Isti'aanah means seeking Allah's help. Ordinary help from others is allowed when they can give it. (Surah Al-Fatihah 1:5; Tirmidhi 2516) Isti'aadhah is seeking Allah's protection. Istighaathah is asking Allah to rescue us from harm. Sacrifice as worship and religious vows belong to Allah alone.



Second Principle: Knowing Islam

Islam means submitting to Allah through Tawheed, obeying Him and leaving Shirk. Religion has three levels: Islam, Iman and Ihsan. Allah accepts Islam as the true religion. (Surah Aal Imran 3:19 and 3:85)

The Five Pillars of Islam

The five pillars are the testimony that only Allah deserves worship and Muhammad ﷺ is His Messenger, the five daily prayers, Zakah, fasting Ramadan and Hajj for those who can perform it. (Bukhari and Muslim) Laa ilaaha rejects every false object of worship and illa Allah affirms worship for Allah alone. Believing Muhammad ﷺ is Allah's Messenger means obeying him, believing his teachings, avoiding what he prohibited and worshipping Allah as he taught. (Surah At-Tawbah 9:128; Surah Ash-Shura 42:21) Allah commands Salah and Zakah. (Surah Al-Bayyinah 98:5) He made fasting Ramadan obligatory. (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:183) He commanded Hajj for those able to go. (Surah Aal Imran 3:97)

The Six Pillars of Iman

Iman means belief in the heart, words on the tongue and actions of the body. It grows with obedience and becomes weaker through sin. Iman has many branches. (Bukhari and Muslim) The six pillars are belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day and Al-Qadr, Allah's decree. (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:177; Muslim, Hadith of Jibril) Belief in Allah includes His Lordship, His worship and His Names and Attributes. Al-Qadr includes Allah's knowledge of everything, His writing of the decree, His will and His creation of all things.

Ihsan and the Hadith of Jibril

Ihsan is worshipping Allah as though you see Him and knowing that He sees you even though you cannot see Him. It also includes doing good to people. (Bukhari and Muslim, Hadith of Jibril) Jibril came as a man and asked the Prophet ﷺ about Islam, Iman and Ihsan to teach the Companions their religion.

Third Principle: Knowing Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

His name is Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Abdul-Muttalib ibn Hashim ﷺ. He was from Quraysh, among the descendants of Ismail son of Ibrahim. He was born in Makkah, became a Prophet at forty and lived for sixty-three years. His mission lasted twenty-three years. The first revelation was from Surah Al-Alaq and the command to preach came with Surah Al-Muddaththir. He later migrated to Madinah. He called people to Tawheed and warned them against Shirk. He spent ten years calling to Tawheed in Makkah. During the Night Journey and Ascension, the five daily prayers became obligatory. Three years later he was commanded to migrate. (Surah Al-Muddaththir 74:1-5)



Hijrah

Hijrah can mean leaving sins and what Allah dislikes. It also means migrating to a place where a Muslim can practise the religion when needed and possible. Different people have different abilities and situations. (Surah An-Nisa 4:97–99; Surah Al-Ankabut 29:56) The Prophet ﷺ taught that Hijrah continues until repentance ends. (Abu Dawud 2479)

The Complete Religion and the Prophet's Death

Allah sent Muhammad ﷺ to all people and jinn. Islam was completed through him. Muslims must not invent new worship. (Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:3; Surah Al-A'raf 7:158) In Madinah the Prophet ﷺ taught further duties including Zakah, fasting, Hajj, Adhan, encouraging good and forbidding evil. He lived there ten years and died ﷺ. The greatest good he taught was Tawheed and the greatest evil he warned against was Shirk. (Surah Az-Zumar 39:30–31)

Resurrection and the Day of Judgment

Allah will bring people back to life after death and judge them for their deeds. He created people from earth, returns them to it and will raise them again. Belief in resurrection is part of Iman. (Surah Taha 20:55; Surah Nuh 71:17–18; Surah An-Najm 53:31; Surah At-Taghabun 64:7)

Why Allah Sent the Messengers

Allah sent Messengers to teach people the truth, give good news and warn against disobedience. (Surah An-Nisa 4:165) Nuh was the first Messenger and Muhammad ﷺ is the final Prophet and Messenger. (Surah An-Nisa 4:163; Surah Al-Ahzab 33:40) A Prophet receives revelation. A Messenger is given a message to convey and call people to. All called people to worship Allah alone.

Rejecting Taghoot

Taghoot means going beyond the proper limits in something worshipped, followed or obeyed. Ibn al-Qayyim explained this meaning. Someone righteous who is worshipped against their wishes does not become Taghoot for that reason. Allah sent a Messenger to every nation to command Tawheed and rejection of Taghoot. (Surah An-Nahl 16:36) The five main heads named in the notes are Iblees, someone pleased to be worshipped, someone calling people to worship himself, someone claiming independent knowledge of the unseen and someone replacing Allah's judgment in the specific way discussed by scholars. Rejecting false worship and believing in Allah is the firm handhold. (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:256)

Striving to Obey Allah

A Muslim strives by learning the religion, obeying Allah, leaving sins, resisting Shaytan and speaking truth with knowledge and good manners. Salah is the pillar of Islam. (Tirmidhi 2616) Matters involving fighting have legal rules and authority and are not personal actions for children or individuals.



Final Summary

The Three Fundamental Principles teach knowledge of Allah, Islam and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. They also explain Tawheed, Shirk, worship, the levels of religion, the Prophet's mission, resurrection and avoiding false worship. Allah knows best. May Allah send peace and blessings upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, his family and his Companions.