



Treading The Path Of Knowledge

Shaikh Abdus Salaam Al-Barjis

Being a Lecture given in Birmingham 1996

Transcribed by Bint Ahmed ibn Sulaiman for www.salafipublications.com

The Talk

Shaikh prayed Khutbah Haajah, Praising Allah, saying the Shahaada, as the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) did when he would come to the Sahaba to teach them. Then he said my beloved brothers in Al-islam I would like to thank Allah with all those things he deserves for giving us the Tawfeeq or the success for coming here together to meet, to participate in what is being presented here today. This meeting is clear proof that you brothers are in love or want to the “khair” (goodness) and it is the mutual co-operation between us on al- birr (righteousness). He said that this meeting had entered into his heart, what pleases him is that in these cities and countries he is happy to see so many faces who are trying to raise the Sunnah and trying to practice the Sunnah, those people because of their effort, they are finding difficulty but inspite of that they are still being patient. He made dua to Allah to make or give us the “thibaat” or to establish us upon this effort and to give us the success and the tawfeeq towards that.

Today's talk is Insha Allah a very important talk because when the human being looks at today's talk he will find that it is more important and needed than he needs his food and his drink. That is because the human being needs to eat or drink once or twice a day or in his night, whereas what he is about to talk about the human being is always in need this. That is he is going to talk about Knowledge. For everyone who is present here today will not fail to recognise the importance, virtues, and superiority of knowledge. That we see the possessors of knowledge Ahl ul-Ilm, the Ulema of Al-Islam, that there is no one who is like them, in their station or their position. As Allah subhana wa ta ala says in the Qur'an

“Are they equal those who have knowledge and those who do not have knowledge” (39:9)

The Sheikh went on to answer that question and say, of course they are not equal, just as the night and the day are not similar. Likewise those people who have knowledge are not similar to those people who do not have knowledge. So Allah has spoken favourably about them in the Qur'an because of this wisdom and this knowledge that they have been given. As Allah says in another Ayat “And whoever has been given hikmah, verily he has been given a lot of good.” (2:269)

On top of this Allah has caused those people of knowledge to bear witness on a very important issue. Anytime we look in the Quran we will find that Allah only causes the witness to be born or to be bought to that which is important.

“Allah bears witness that there is no other God worthy of worship except Allah and His Angels, and the Ulema (the people who know) bear witness to this.” (3:18)

In seeing the importance and the virtues of knowledge in Al- Islaam we have only to look at the authentic Hadith that has been collected by Imaam Bukhari and Imaam Muslim on the authority of Muawiyah, “Whoever Allah wants good for a person He gives him ‘fiqh’ in the religion, understanding in the Deen”.

This Hadith is a clear proof that whoever Allah wants the ‘khair ‘ for that person in this dunya (life) and the akhira (the eternal after life), Allah gives him the success or tawfeeq to learn about the knowledge of the religion, about the ilm-ul- Sharia. He said all we have to do is look at the many texts that can be found from the Qur’an and the Sunnah and the message comes clear to us. The reason we understand that Allah wanted good for that person who is being taught the knowledge of the legislation of Al- islaam is that the person becomes one who is worshipping Allah on “baseerah” or clear evidence. So whoever worships Allah and he has worship on baseerah he eventually goes to Jannah (paradise). The opposite understanding of this Hadith is that if Allah does not teach a person or allow him to learn about the knowledge of the legislation of Al - Islaam than Allah did not want good for that person. When we find a person who has not been blessed with the knowledge of the Akhaam of Islaam, the rules and the regulations of the Deen, the one who does not know it- you will find him in a confused state, bouncing back and forth and this is something Allah does not want from his Ibaad (servants). There are two types of knowledge in Al-Islaam :

1. The first type is Fard al-‘Ain knowledge - This is obligatory and compulsory for every single Muslim to know, whether male or female - no one is exempt from this type of knowledge.
2. The second type is Fard al Kifaayah - That is knowledge that if a few muslims take care of the responsibility falls off the shoulders of the people.

Concerning the first part of knowledge, that a person studies and learns all of those things which are directly related to himself. The person knows about these issues in detail.

- a) At Tawheed - The knowledge of the Oneness of Allah. His Names, Attributes, Actions.
- b) Issues of Salah (prayer) - as related to him. How to pray, as the Prophet (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) prayed.
- c) Zakat - if zakat is wajib on him and whom should he give it to.
- d) Saum - fasting in Ramadhan, when the fast begins and ends. The etiquette of fasting.
- e) Hajj - Pilgrimage if he can afford to do so. All the rules and regulations related to the Hajj.

- f) Issues about purity (wudhu etc.), and everything that is connected and related to himself. He does whatever he can so that he can become one who knows that which Allah has made obligatory on him.

[This is summarised by saying] get knowledge of Allah and His Messenger (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) and get knowledge about Al-Islam with the 'Addilah' 'the proof, evidence'.

This aspect is a comment upon what is fard ain - You have to know Allah to worship Allah - His Oneness, His Lordship, the worship of Allah, about Allah's Names and Attributes.

The Muslim has to make the Tawheed of Allah, this means he has to come to know his Lord, he has to have the correct Creed and the proper ideology as relates to the Lordship of Allah (Ruboobiyyah). That he recognises and believes that Allah is Al- Khaliq - The Creator of everything that exists and that Allah is Ar-Razzaq - the One who Provides for everything that exists. and that Allah is the Sustainer and in His Hands is the Dominion of all things, He alone is the One who is responsible. As relates to His worship Allah alone deserves unconditional worship, Allah alone is the One that a person makes dua to and Allah alone is the one that a person seeks assistance from, a person does not make Tawakkal (trust and rely) on anything or anyone else except Allah as it relates to the Tawheed of Allah as it relates to the Tawheed (Oneness) of Allah's Names and his Characteristics. The person has to understand the Oneness of Allah and that he establishes and affirms the good Names that Allah has established and affirmed for Himself as well as the Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) and the Actions that Allah has affirmed for Himself as to what Allah does and what the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) affirmed as to the Actions of Allah. Likewise he has to believe and make the Tawheed in that.

The second issue of the second point is how we are supposed to know the Messengership of the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam).

He said this is manifested in the person in that the Muslim is the one who obeys the teachings of the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) and he follows his way unconditionally and he has the belief in what he bought The Risaalah that is the Message. He makes it his habit to know the religion Al-Islam with the evidence and the proof that has been left by the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam). Though the Muslim has never seen the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam), the Muslim knows that every word he spoke every action he did was from the Truth and wisdom. The Muslim has to be one who knows the affairs of Al-Islam, he must know what he has been ordered to do and what he has been ordered to stay away from, he must know that every moment and second of this life will have to be accounted for. So a Muslim is one who does not waste time on fruitless and useless talk and activity but a Muslim is one who strives to make time a benefit in this world for the Akhirah. On an issue like Salah - he has to know how to make Salah according to how the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) has bought and performed the Salah and not on what this person or that person has shown. As the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) said in an authentic Hadith said "Pray as you see me Praying".

So the Fard ain knowledge is compulsory upon everyone. The Muslim must learn about this. Some of the ways that a person can come to this knowledge is by reading books or by asking the people of knowledge. Whoever has the aptitude and the ability to read he should take advantage of that and he should read and he should take his knowledge from the Ulema who are rightly guided and stick to what the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) came with. As for the person who does not have the capability of reading, then what he has to do is to ask the people of knowledge because this is the only thing that he can accomplish and is capable of doing, or he should listen to tapes or go to lectures and to talks or attend a circle. The proof for this is the statement of Allah. But first one can seek out the supplications in the Qur'an that were made by the Prophets when they sought the help of Allah in matters related to them and their nations / peoples. Always supplicate to Allah that Allah Alone can guide you to the truth and the people of truth and that Allah alone can protect you from the falsehood and people of falsehood and harm.

“Ask the people of Knowledge, the people of adh-Dhikr if you do not know” (21:7)

So a person must go in search in order to get this knowledge. The point or maqsood of explaining all of this is so that you know that it is compulsory and obligatory on each one of you, every single person to make himself aware of the knowledge that is Fard ain whether the person is a man a women, whether the person can read or cannot read, whether the person is big or small, young or old, once a person it is obligatory for such to learn this knowledge and to practice what he or she has learnt. There are no excuses for not learning about the Deen when you know you have to learn.

As for the second level or division of Knowledge, Fard al Kifayah. Every time a Muslim gets the knowledge that is additional and a surplus, so the person who memorises the Quran or memorises the Sunnah and acts upon it or he comes to know a Hadith or the knowledge of Usool al fiqh or Iktilaq or Khilaf (opinions) that happened between the scholars of Islaam. If a person came to know about these affairs this is what is known as Fard al Kifayah. All this knowledge if we find a group from among the Muslims who have taken it upon themselves to know it, to learn it, to memorise it, then the responsibility falls from the shoulders of everyone else. But if we find that all of the Muslims have neglected to memorise or learn this knowledge and have left it alone and have not memorised the Quran and the Sunnah, THEN ALL OF THE MUSLIMS ARE GOING TO BE HELD RESPONSIBLE AND THEY ARE ALL SINNING. An example is given to show this point, the laws of al faraa'id - the laws when a person dies how do we distribute what they have left behind. If we find some people who have learnt about this knowledge of the science of inheritance, so when the Muslims come to them they begin to distribute the wealth of the dead person then the responsibility falls from the shoulders of the rest of the Muslims because there is a group from among them who have learnt about this. But if we find that none of the Muslims have learnt about this science then we all are held responsible and we are all sinning.

The knowledge of learning the additional or surplus knowledge is better than all the Nawafil of the Eebadat. Any type or form of worship that you find is surplus is better than

the Nawfil of the Salah, the sheikh did not say it is better than the wajib fard (obligatory) salah but the nawaafil (optional) - it is better than the nawafil fast, or Hajj. As Imaam Nawawi (rahimahullaah) said the Salaf had this consensus that the person to learn about knowledge is better than all the other types of Nawafil. This statement is the statement of the Salaf and the people of Knowledge, it is also the narration of Imaam Ahmed. These are the people who want for themselves and this Ummah happiness in this life and happiness in the next life. Because these people they are the ones who bring benefit to the people, they are the ones who make clear for the people the affairs they need to know about on a daily basis. So they are in a position to guide the people to the path of success. As for the people who work for this knowledge, they are the people who will acquire a great reward that is khair from Allah. Statement of Imaam al- Thawri, "Allah has not been worshipped with anything that is better than the understanding the understanding of the religion."

The one who worships Allah with understanding is the best one to worship. Likened to that is the statement of Imaam Sufyan when he said "There is nothing in the sight of Allah after the fard then acquiring or gaining knowledge".

Concerning this knowledge - those who are serious, and have the desire to learn and know will ask the question - How does one go about gaining knowledge, what is the way that is correct? If a person wants to go and acquire knowledge, for a person who wants to get the knowledge it is easy - for such a person Allah has made it easy for. For such a person will practice what has already been mentioned to seek that knowledge. There are many points which we need to know and to comprehend that we must know if we want to get that knowledge of the Deen.

Points

1. This is the most weighty and important point. The person who wants to go out and get knowledge, he must have Ikhlaas, must have sincerity to Allah. That is because searching for the knowledge is worship, what you are doing when you go out to get knowledge is that you are worshipping Allah and trying to come close to Allah. So there are conditions for this worship to be accepted and this Ikhlaas (sincerity) is one of those conditions. As Allah has ordered us when He said, "Worship Allah (sincerely) and do not take any other partners along with Him." (4:36)
2. It has to be in accordance with what the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) bought and cited the Ayat of Quran. "And follow that which has been revealed unto you and do not follow the Awliyaah besides him" (7:2)

So these two proofs is that the person must have Ikhlas and must follow the Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam).

The student of knowledge is only going to get success and Tawfeeq when he has been blessed to make his niyyah (intention) solely and totally for the pleasure of Allah. The one who is trying to get this knowledge to please Allah, so as to arrive with a successful mark in the hereafter. This can be understood from the Hadith, "Whoever goes out and takes a

road of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him because of that the road to Jannah (Paradise).”

This Talib or seeker of knowledge should be sincere and should have an ardent desire to erase the ignorance from himself, should have a desire to take this ummah from the depths of darkness, and from being astray into the light of the Quran and the Sunnah. But as for the person whose intention is not pure and sincere such a person will go to the right and to the left while he is trying to learn the knowledge. Such a person learns the knowledge so that he can be looked at as a person of knowledge, so that he can be in a position to argue with the people of knowledge or he is learning this knowledge so that he can get a particular place or position in the world. Such a persons efforts will be null and void of blessing. A person with such characteristics will be void of any success or tawfeeq from Allah, and his efforts will come as a cause of sorrow on the Day of Judgement, except the one who comes with a heart that is saaleh - Imaam al Zuhri said, “Whoever goes out to acquire knowledge for this Dunya as well as the Akhirah than that is the portion he will receive.”

The last and important point is that we must have a way of acquiring this knowledge. This knowledge is only going to be acquired by studying it in stages, because we have some people who want to acquire or desire to acquire all the knowledge at once. Some of the Ulema of Al- Islaam have made a famous statement, “Whoever tries to acquire all the knowledge at one time, he is going to leave all the knowledge at one time”

The correct way of gaining this knowledge is to go about it in stages. That is we learn about the small issues of knowledge before we go or try to jump in on the big issues. Therefore whenever the student wants to start to educate himself, he begins to learn about those smaller books that explain and give a clarification to the major books. So some of the Ulema took some of the major works and made them concise so that it would be easier to learn and to memorise. Allah has pointed in the Quran to this concept of getting knowledge in stages:-

“And the Kuffar said, “Why is the Quran not revealed to him at one time”. And We revealed the Quran to you in stages, so that it can strengthen your heart”. (25:32)

Allah was capable of revealing all of the Quran at one time. But Allah has taught us a lesson by showing us that the way of getting knowledge is done in stages. The Ulema in a statement also said the, “Whoever is going to lose the Usool or the way is because he does not go about acquiring the knowledge in the right way.”

Questions and Answer Session

Question: What advise can be given to the brother who go to the people of innovation to gain knowledge taking from them what is Saheeh and rejecting that which is weak or fabricated when they do not have the knowledge of the Deen?

Answer: The student of knowledge are of two types of people:

1. The first type is the one who has not been blessed with the tools or the utensils to qualify or to distinguish the Truth (haqq) from the falsehood (batil). Concerning this person, whoever fits this description or characteristic, then this person should only take his knowledge from the Scholars of the Sunnah who are well known for their scholastic aptitude and their abilities. This is because that person may lead you astray because you do not know what is being said or the sources.
2. The second type of person is the Talib or the student who has the ability, has knowledge of the Sunnah and he knows what he is doing and he has been qualified and possesses those tools and utensils to know the truth from falsehood. If this person wants to learn from a particular person who has some kind of deviance or innovation in him, this student who has knowledge, and is qualified in a particular knowledge of Hadith, then he is allowed to do so but he must be careful. A scholar of the past Ibn Qudamah made a statement concerning Abad Ibn Yaqoob "The man who is thiqah (trustworthy) in his narration" (he was reliable in his narration in transmitting the Hadith) but he had a problem or deviation in his religion". The second proof is from Imaam Bukhari who cited many people who have problems in their religion and narrated upon people, so he said if you have the ability to do so than it is alright.

The Sheikh ended with prayer of praise and forgiveness.