

# SALAFIYYAH THE SAVED PATH EXPLAINED



Compiled by Abū Muhammad Yahyā

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## **Author's Preface (Muqaddimah)**

All praise is due to Allah alone, Lord of all that exists. I begin this humble work with the sincere intention to seek His pleasure alone, to serve His Book and the guidance of His Messenger ﷺ, to teach myself and my fellow believers, and to deepen my own understanding of His Revelation. I remind myself, before anyone else, that this writing is not for status, fame, nor recognition — but solely to seek His Face, His acceptance, and His forgiveness.

This reminder is for my own heart before it is for others, and I ask Allah to purify my intention from any hidden desires or worldly attachments, and to make every word a testimony for me and not against me on the Day when no soul will benefit except by what Allah has accepted from them.

### **Du‘ā:**

O Allah, I ask You by Your Beautiful Names and Perfect Attributes to make this work sincerely for Your sake, and to accept it from me even with its shortcomings and deficiencies. Make it a means for me and those who read it to draw nearer to You, to reflect deeply upon Your Words, and to act upon what is contained therein.

O Allah, grant us beneficial knowledge, hearts that are humbled before You, and actions that are pure and righteous. Do not make this knowledge a proof against us, but rather a light in our graves, a companion in our loneliness, and a witness for us on the Day we meet You. Ameen.

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## Salafiyyah: The Saved Path Explained

### The Linguistic Definition:

As-Salafiyyah means ascription to as-salaf (السلف) — those who have preceded, as in those who have come before us in time. The word "salaf" is used in Arabic to denote predecessors or foregoers, such as when a person is said to have “passed by” or “preceded.”

As-Salafiyyah (السلفية) is a nisbah (an ascription) to the Salaf — i.e., it means “the way of the Salaf.” Just like Malikiyyah is ascription to Imām Mālik or Shāfi‘iyyah to Imām ash-Shāfi‘ī, Salafiyyah is ascription to the collective path of the Prophet’s ﷺ Companions and the first three virtuous generations.

### The Root Meaning of "Salaf" (سَلَفَ):

The word Salaf linguistically comes from the Arabic root:

سَلَفَ – yaslifu – salfan

Meaning: "to precede," "to come before," or "to pass by in time." It is used to refer to people or things that came before others in time, action, or status.

Ibn Fāris (d. 395H) said in Maqāyīs al-Lughah: “The root س-ل-ف denotes something preceding and going forward. It is said: salafa fulānun (so-and-so has preceded).”

Imām Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711H) in Lisān al-‘Arab states: “As-Salaf: those who passed before you from your forefathers and relatives... and every one who preceded you in virtue, religion, or knowledge is considered from the Salaf.”

### The Legislative (Shar‘ī) Definition:

Usage of “Salaf” in The Qur’an and Hadīth

In The Qur’an:

فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ سَلَفًا وَمَثَلًا لِّلْآخِرِينَ

“So We made them predecessors (salaf) and an example for the later people.” [Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:56]

Tafsīr scholars like al-Qurṭubī explained this to mean: “a precedent in punishment,” i.e., those who passed before and became a warning for others.

In Hadith: The Prophet ﷺ said to Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها:

" قَايِي نَعْم السَّلَفُ أَنَا لَكَ "

“I am the best Salaf (predecessor) for you.” [Sahih Muslim, no. 2450]

And The Prophet ﷺ said: “The best of mankind is my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them...” [Sahih al-Bukhārī, no. 2652; Muslim, no. 2533].

Shaykh Rabī‘ al-Madkhalī (حفظه الله) said: “The Salafi Manhaj in its Shar‘ī definition is that which is firmly rooted in the Book and the Sunnah, upon the understanding of the rightly guided predecessors in creed, worship, and rectification.” (Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah – p. 55).

#### **So, Salafiyyah refers to:**

- The Ṣaḥābah (Companions),
- The Ṭābi‘ūn (Successors),
- The Atbā‘ al-Ṭābi‘īn (Followers of the Successors), Collectively referred to as the three virtuous generations.

#### **Application of As-Salaf as-Sālih:**

The term “As-Salaf as-Sālih” refers specifically to these three generations. Included among their followers are Imāms such as:

- Ash-Sha‘bī, Ṭāwūs, Mujāhid
- The four Imāms: Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, ash-Shāfi‘ī, Aḥmad
- Al-Awzā‘ī, the two Sufyāns, the two Ḥammāds
- Al-Layth ibn Sa‘d, Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām
- Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and others

Anyone who followed their way in belief, practice, and understanding is considered upon the Salafi Manhaj.



## **A Clarification by the Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Verdicts – Fataawā al-Lajnah ad-Dā’imah:**

In a time when many groups, ideologies, and labels exist within the Muslim Ummah, it becomes necessary to return to the clear and authentic understanding of Islam as it was practiced by the earliest generations — those whom the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ praised and testified to their virtue. One of the most widely asked questions among sincere Muslims today is: “What is As-Salafiyyah, and what is the ruling regarding affiliation with it?”

The Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Verdicts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of Shaykh ‘Abdul-‘Azīz ibn Bāz رحمه الله, offered the following comprehensive and beneficial answer:

**Question:** What is As-Salafiyyah and what is your opinion regarding it?

**Answer:** All praise is due to Allaah alone, and peace and blessings be upon the Messenger, his family and his Companions.

To proceed:

“As-Salafiyyah” is an attachment or affiliation to the Salaf. And “The Salaf” are the Companions of the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ and the Imāms of guidance (may Allaah be pleased with them) from the first three generations, those whose goodness Allaah’s Messenger ﷺ bore witness to in his statement: “The best of mankind is my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them. Then there will come people where bearing witness of one of them will precede his taking an oath and his taking an oath will be his bearing witness.” (Imām Aḥmad: (4/426), Al-Bukhārī: (2651), Muslim: (2535).

And “The Salafiyyoon [or Salafees]” is the plural of “Salafī”, an attachment or affiliation to the Salaf, and its meaning has already preceded above — and they are those who traverse upon the Methodology (Manhaj) of the Salaf in following the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah [of the Messenger of Allaah], and inviting to them, and acting upon them, and they are, due to this, Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā’ah.

Permanent Committee for Research and Verdicts Shaykh ‘Abdul-‘Azīz Bin Bāz Fataawā al-Lajnah ad-Dā’imah (2/165–166), Fatwa No. 1361

### **Statements from the Salaf:**

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728H رحمه الله) said in Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā (4/149): “There is no blame upon the one who makes apparent the madhhab of the Salaf,



ascribes himself to it, and takes pride in it. Rather, that must be accepted from him by agreement, for indeed the madhhab of the Salaf is nothing but the truth.”

Here, Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمه الله) affirms both the linguistic and religious validity of ascribing to the Salaf — hence, Salafi.

He (رحمه الله) also said: "The Salaf are known to be more knowledgeable, more wise, more correct in their understanding, more guided and more pious than those who came after them. So following them is the only way to salvation." (Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā – 4/157).

Also, “The correct view is that the truth is what the Prophet ﷺ came with, and that there is no way to know it except through the path of the Salaf. So whoever opposes them has gone astray.” (Dar’ Ta‘āruḍ al-‘Aql wa-n-Naql – 7/264).

Also: "There is no blame upon the one who makes apparent the Madhhab of the Salaf, ascribes himself to it and takes pride in it. Rather, that must be accepted from him by agreement. For indeed the Madhhab of the Salaf is nothing but the truth." (Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā – 4/149).

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241H رحمه الله) said: “The fundamentals of the Sunnah with us are: holding fast to what the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ were upon, and taking them as an example to follow.” (Uṣūl as-Sunnah, no. 1).

Imām al-Awzā‘ī (d. 157H رحمه الله) said: "Hold fast to the āthār (narrations) of the Salaf, even if the people reject you. Beware of the opinions of men, even if they beautify them with speech." (Sharḥ Usūl I‘tiqād Ahl al-Sunnah by al-Lālikā‘ī – no. 126).

### Statements from the Scholars:

Shaykh al-Albānī (رحمه الله): “Salafiyyah is not a ḥizb (party). It is the scale by which we measure all parties. It is adherence to the Qur’an and Sunnah as understood by the Salaf as-Sālih.”

And he (رحمه الله) said: “The Salafi is the one who says, ‘I am upon the methodology of the Salaf aṣ-Ṣāliḥ.’ This is not a name for a group or party. Rather, it is a clear path traced by the early righteous generations.” (Silsilat al-Hudā wa-n-Nūr – Cassette 745).

And he (رحمه الله) said: “The meaning of ‘Salafiyyah’ is to follow the Book and the Sunnah upon the understanding of the Salaf. Whoever follows them, he is a Salafi, even if he does not call himself that. And whoever contradicts them, he is not upon

the Manhaj of the Salaf, even if he ascribes himself to it.” (Silsilat al-Hudā wan-Nūr – tape 784).

Shaykh Ibn Bāz رحمه الله said: “Salafiyyah is nothing other than Islam and adherence to the pure teachings of the Prophet ﷺ and his rightly guided Companions.” (Majmū‘ Fatāwā wa-Maḳālāt Ibn Bāz – 1/291)

He رحمه الله also said: “Salafiyyah is to cling to what the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions were upon, in belief, worship, and manners.”

Shaykh Muqbil ibn Hādī (رحمه الله) said: “The Salafi is the one who follows the Book and Sunnah upon the understanding of the Salaf, and disassociates from all innovation.”

Shaykh ‘Ubayd al-Jābirī (رحمه الله): stated that “Salafiyyah is to ascribe oneself to the predecessors in both creed and methodology, tracing back to the Companions and those who followed them, in every aspect of the religion.”

Shaykh Rabī‘ al-Madkhalī (حفظه الله) wrote: “As-Salafiyyah is not a mere label. It is a methodology in worship, belief, manners, and dealings — it is the clear path of the Prophet ﷺ and his noble companions.” (Manhaj Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā‘ah fi Naqd ar-Rijāl wal-Kutub wal-Tawā‘if).

Therefore, as-Salafiyyah refers to the original and unaltered Islam practiced by the Prophet ﷺ, his Companions, and the first three generations whom he praised in authentic narrations. It is the methodology based solely on the Qur’an and the authentic Sunnah, understood and implemented through the lens of the Salaf — the righteous predecessors — without innovation or reinterpretation.

This Manhaj encompasses correct belief (‘Aqīdah), worship (‘Ibādah), character (Akhlāq), and methodology (Manhaj) in da‘wah, adherence, and rectification. As emphasized by the scholars of the past and present, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Imām Aḥmad, Shaykh al-Albānī, Ibn Bāz, and Shaykh Rabī‘, it is not a party or faction, but rather the pure Islam upon which salvation depends. Whoever follows the Qur’an and Sunnah according to the understanding of the Salaf is, by reality and not merely by name, a Salafi—firmly upon the path of guidance and free from the deviations of later sects and innovations.

### Core Principles of the Salafi Manhaj *(coming soon)*

1. Pure Tawḥīd in all its categories (Rubūbiyyah, Ulūhiyyah, and Asmā' wa-Ṣifāt), and complete rejection of all forms of shirk, kufr, and superstition.
2. Adherence to the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ in all matters of creed, worship, character, and dealings.
3. Understanding Islam strictly based upon the understanding of the Salaf as-Ṣāliḥ (the righteous predecessors), namely the Companions, the Tābi'īn, and the Atbā' at-Tābi'īn.
4. Adherence to the Jama'ah — the united body of the Muslims upon truth, under the leadership of the Muslim ruler.
5. Rejection of all religious innovations (Bid'ah) — whether in belief, speech, or actions — and warning against the people of innovation.
6. Clear disassociation from Ahl al-Bid'ah wal-Ahwā' (the people of innovation and desires), regardless of their eloquence or claims.
7. Calling to Islam (Da'wah) upon authentic knowledge ('Ilm), sound understanding (Fiqh), and wisdom (Ḥikmah), in accordance with the methodology of the Prophets.
8. Prioritizing purification of the soul (Tazkiyat an-Nafs), sincerity (Ikhlaṣ), and upright character (Akhlaq), coupled with adherence to outward acts of worship.
9. Obedience to the Muslim ruler in all that does not involve disobedience to Allah, while forbidding rebellion, revolts, and public incitement.
10. Preservation of the unity of the Muslims upon the Sunnah, and rejection of all partisan groups (Ahzāb) and sectarianism.
11. Returning disputes and differences back to the Qur'an and Sunnah, with the understanding of the Salaf.
12. Establishing justice, fairness, and truthfulness in all dealings, and rejecting oppression (Ẓulm), injustice, and lying.
13. Upholding the rights of the scholars of the Sunnah, defending them, and benefiting from their ilm, while avoiding the ignorant and the innovators.

14. Methodical gradualism (Tadarruj) in rectifying societies, focusing first on Tawhīd and ‘Aqīdah before politics or social activism.
15. Rejection of extremism, negligence, exaggeration, and laxity in the religion.
16. Acceptance of the authentic statements of the scholars and rejecting opinions that contradict the Qur’an, Sunnah, and the way of the Salaf.
17. Clarity (Wuḍūḥ) in Manhaj, Da‘wah, and stances; avoiding vague or ambiguous language that may mislead the masses.
18. Enjoining good and forbidding evil (al-Amr bi-l-Ma‘rūf wa-n-Nahy ‘an al-Munkar) with wisdom, justice, and in accordance with the limits of the Sharī‘ah.
19. Encouraging knowledge-based refutation of falsehood, while maintaining the manners of the people of Sunnah and knowledge.
20. Avoiding the methods of the political activists (Ḥizbiyyah), Khawārij, Ikhwān al-Muslimīn, and other deviated sects.
21. Rejection of blind following (Taqlīd) in issues of ‘Aqīdah and Manhaj, while respecting the scholars and following their evidences.
22. Caution from newly introduced methodologies in Da‘wah, worship, and Tarbiyah that were not practiced by the Salaf.
23. Giving precedence to the evidences over emotions, mass movements, or the desires of the people.
24. Establishing the correct ‘Aqīdah of al-Walā’ wa-l-Barā’ — love and loyalty for the people of Sunnah, and hatred and disavowal of disbelief, innovation, and its people.
25. Upholding moderation in all affairs, as was the way of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions.
26. Complete submission (Tasleem) to the texts of the Qur’an and Sunnah, even if it conflicts with personal logic, culture, or societal trends.