

The Sunnah Is Revelation

Allah says concerning the Prophet ﷺ: "Nor does he speak from (his own) inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed." (53:3-4)

This verse establishes a foundational principle of Islam: the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is revelation from Allah, just as the Qur'an is revelation. The Sunnah is not personal opinion, independent reasoning, or cultural habit; rather, it is divinely guided instruction revealed to the Prophet ﷺ and preserved for his Ummah.

Allah commands obedience to both the Qur'an and the Messenger ﷺ, making no separation between them: "And obey Allah and the Messenger that you may receive mercy." (3:132) Likewise, Allah says: "And whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids you from refrain from it" (59:7)

The Sunnah explains, clarifies, details, and applies the Qur'an. Through the Sunnah, the meanings of prayer, fasting, zakah, hajj, lawful and unlawful matters, and acts of worship are made clear. The Prophet ﷺ conveyed this guidance as part of the revelation entrusted to him, just as Allah commanded: "O Messenger, convey what has been revealed to you from your Lord." (5:67)

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said: "I have left among you two matters; you will never go astray as long as you hold fast to them: the Book of Allah and my Sunnah." [al-Muwatta]

Imām ash-Shafi'i stated that Allah mentioned "The Book" and mentioned "The Wisdom," and that the people of knowledge of the Qur'an said: the Wisdom is the Sunnah of the Messenger ﷺ, indicating that revelation consists of both the recited revelation (the Qur'an) and the explained revelation (the Sunnah). The righteous Salaf understood that separating the Qur'an from the Sunnah leads to misguidance, while holding firmly to both preserves the religion as it was revealed.

Ittiba (Following the Sunnah) is the Path to Salvation

Allah has made following the Messenger ﷺ the condition for guidance and love from Him. Allah says: "Say, if you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." (3:31) This verse establishes that love of Allah, forgiveness of sins, and divine mercy are all dependent upon ittiba' of the Messenger ﷺ not upon claims, personal desires, or innovations.

Allah also says: "And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers, We will turn him to what he has chosen and burn him in Hell—and what an evil destination." (4:115) This Ayah joins two inseparable matters: following the Messenger ﷺ and adhering to the way of the believers; the Companions—demonstrating that salvation lies only on this path.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "I have left among you two matters; you will never go astray as long as you hold firmly to them: the Book of Allah and my Sunnah." [al-Muwatta] This path is not known by numbers, claims, or emotions, but by strict adherence to what was revealed and practiced first. The Sunnah is the criterion by which truth is distinguished from falsehood and guidance from misguidance. Whoever holds fast to it is preserved, and whoever turns away from it has chosen deviation, even if he intends good.

Let us therefore renew our commitment to cling firmly to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ upon the understanding of the righteous Salaf, seeking Allah's love, forgiveness, and salvation.



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Divine Guidance Alongside
the Qur'an



Compiled by: Abu Muhammad Yahya

The Sunnah as Revelation Transmitted by Jibril (alaihi al-salam)

Allah says: “And indeed, this Qur’an is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. The trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart, that you may be among the warners.” (26:192–194) The angel Jibril (‘alaihi as-Salam) was entrusted by Allah to convey revelation to the Messenger ﷺ with precision and truthfulness. This trust was not limited to the transmission of the Qur’an alone, but also included the divinely guided instruction by which the Prophet ﷺ understood, implemented, and taught Allah’s commands. The Sunnah, therefore, was taught to the Prophet ﷺ through revelation and divine guidance, not personal opinion or independent reasoning.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “The Holy Spirit (Jibril) has inspired into my heart that no soul will die until it has completed its provision and its appointed term, so fear Allah and be moderate in seeking provision.” (Ahmad, Ibn Majah, Al-Hakim)

This narration demonstrates that revelation was conveyed to the Prophet ﷺ, beyond the recited Qur’an, including guidance, rulings, and clarification. Through Jibril, the Prophet ﷺ was taught how to pray, fast, judge, worship, and conduct himself in accordance with Allah’s will. This divinely guided instruction was then conveyed to the Ummah as the Sunnah. For this reason, the Sunnah is revelation transmitted faithfully to His Messenger ﷺ, and preserved as authoritative guidance for the religion.

And Allah attributed the act of bringing revelation to the heart of the Messenger ﷺ directly to Jibril, establishing him as the appointed transmitter of wahy to the Prophet ﷺ. Allah says: “Say: Whoever is an enemy to Jibril – then indeed, he has brought it down upon your heart by permission of Allah, confirming what came before it, and as guidance and glad tidings for the believers.” (2:97)

The Only Path to Correct Islam and Sound Iman

Allah says: “But no, by your Lord, they will not truly believe until they make you judge concerning that over which they dispute, and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged, and submit with full submission.” (4:65)

This verse establishes that true īmān is inseparable from complete submission to the judgments and guidance of the Messenger ﷺ. Islam cannot be correctly understood, practiced, or preserved without referring back to the Sunnah in belief, rulings, worship, and conduct.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “All of my Ummah will enter Paradise except those who refuse.” It was said, “Who will refuse, O Messenger of Allah?” He said, “Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise, and whoever disobeys me has refused.” [Sahih al-Bukhari]

Allah tied guidance directly to obedience to the Messenger ﷺ, saying: “And if you obey him, you will be guided.” (24:54). The Sunnah therefore defines how Islam is correctly practiced. For this reason, the Prophet ﷺ said: “Pray as you have seen me pray.” [Sahih al-Bukhari], and he said regarding hajj: “Take from me your rites.” [Sahih Muslim]. These commands establish that correct worship and sound īmān are only realized by following the prophetic example, not personal interpretation or intention alone.

The righteous Salaf understood that the Sunnah is the practical explanation of Islam and the measuring scale of īmān. Without adherence to the Sunnah, people fall into misinterpretation, contradiction, and innovation. Holding fast to the Sunnah safeguards belief, preserves acts of worship, and ensures that Islam remains upon the form taught by the Messenger ﷺ and practiced by his Companions.

Abandoning the Sunnah: The Root of Deviation, Bid‘ah, and Loss

Allah warns against opposing the guidance of His Messenger ﷺ, saying: “And let those beware who oppose the Messenger’s command, lest a trial befall them or a painful punishment afflict them.” (24:63)

This verse establishes that turning away from the Sunnah is not a minor error, but a cause of tribulation in the heart and deviation in religion. When the Sunnah is neglected or replaced, confusion enters belief, innovation enters worship, and division spreads within the Ummah.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not from me.” [Sahih al-Bukhari] He ﷺ also said: “Indeed, the best speech is the Book of Allah, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, and the worst of affairs are newly invented matters.” [Sahih Muslim]

The Salaf were explicit that innovation is not born except from abandoning the Sunnah. Imām Mālik ibn Anas said in a decisive statement that became a foundational principle of Ahl al-Sunnah: “Whoever introduces into Islam an innovation and considers it good has claimed that Muḥammad ﷺ betrayed the message, because Allah says: ‘This day I have perfected for you your religion.’ So whatever was not religion on that day can never be religion today.” This establishes with clarity that every deviation is a rejection of the sufficiency of the Sunnah, and that preservation of the religion lies only in strict adherence to what the Messenger ﷺ conveyed and what the Companions practiced—without addition, alteration, or substitution.

The righteous Salaf understood that every innovation begins with abandoning the Sunnah and preferring opinion, desire, or newly introduced practices over revealed guidance. Safety, unity, and steadfastness are only found in holding firmly to the Sunnah as it was practiced by the Companions.