

When Scholars Disappear—Misguidance Spreads

Reminder From

Shaykh Salih al-Fawzan

حَافِظُهُ اللهُ

Translation & Lesson Benefits

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Shaykh Salih al-Fawzan حَافِظُهُ اللهُ said:

If the scholars are lost, evil and اختلاف (differences) occur.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Indeed, Allah does not take away this knowledge by snatching it away from the hearts of men. Rather, He takes away knowledge by the death of the scholars. Then when no scholar remains, people will take ignorant leaders. They will give fatwā without knowledge, so they will go astray and lead others astray.”

And shirk did not occur among the people of Nuh except after the loss of the scholars. The people of Nuh (alaihi sallam) were made to see it as good by Shaytan: he suggested to them that they make images of the righteous so that remembering them would encourage them to worship more (and be more eager in worship). So they obeyed Shaytan, made images of the righteous, and set them up in their sitting places.

And Shaytan intends evil for them, but he is not able to do so when scholars are present. That is why he did not command them to worship those images while the scholars were still there. Rather, he waited until the scholars died, and knowledge was removed, and knowledge was forgotten. Then he said: “Your forefathers did not set up these images except to worship them, and through them they used to be given rain.” So they worshipped them besides Allah, because there were no scholars among them to forbid them from that.

So shirk occurred, and destruction occurred among the people of Nuh (alaihi sallam), as Allah, the Majestic and Most High, mentioned in the Qur’an. And the cause of this was the loss of the scholars.

Benefit #1

“If the scholars are lost, evil and اختلاف (differences) occur.”

This principle is from the foundations of how Allah preserves guidance in the Ummah: that people must return to knowledge and its carriers, and that ignorance becomes dominant when the أهل العلم (the people of knowledge) disappear.

Allah commanded the one who does not know to return to those who know, saying:

So the أصل (foundation) is that the دين (Din) is not taken from ignorance, nor from the one who speaks without علم (ilm), but rather it is returned to أهل الذكر (the people of remembrance/knowledge). And this is why when scholars are present, the people have a living مرجع (reference) to clarify الحق (truth), refute falsehood, and correct mistakes—so اختلاف (difference) is restrained and evil is blocked before it spreads.

And Allah also made the cure for dispute and اختلاف the return to revelation, saying:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

“O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Should you disagree on anything, then refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you ‘truly’ believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is the best and fairest resolution.” (4:59)

So اختلاف does not vanish by slogans, nor by emotions, nor by gathering upon personalities. Rather, it is removed by رَدّ النزاع (returning the dispute) to the Book and the Sunnah. And who are the ones who properly return the people to Allah and His Messenger? They are the علماء (ulema) who inherit the knowledge and understand the evidences.

And because the religion depends on علم and proper deduction—Allah condemned those who spread matters without returning them to the people of knowledge:

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ سَوَّلُوا لَهُ زُبُودَهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلَّهُ
الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ سَوَّلُوا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لِاتَّبِعْتُمْ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

“And when there comes to them information about security or fear, they spread it. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then those who can draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it. Had it not been for the favour of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have followed Shaytan—except for a few.” (4:83)

So when the people stop returning matters to those who can “draw correct conclusions” (يستنبطونه)—meaning أهل العلم (the people of knowledge) then corruption spreads, panic spreads, falsehood spreads, and Shaytan’s path becomes easy.

And for this reason, Allah commanded unity and explicitly forbade division:

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۗ وَأذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ
فُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا ۗ وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا ۗ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ
لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

“And hold firmly together to the rope of Allah and do not be divided. Remember Allah’s favour upon you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts, so you—by His grace—became brothers. And you were at the brink of a fiery pit and He saved you from it. This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so that you may be ‘rightly’ guided.” (3:103)

So unity is not built upon ignorance—rather, it is built upon “the rope of Allah,” and the rope of Allah is known by علم. And when علم is lifted, then the rope is no longer held properly, and people divide.

And Allah warned that dispute produces weakness, collapse, and loss:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۗ وَلَا تَتَزَعَوْا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ ۗ وَأَصْبِرُوا ۗ إِنَّ الْأَلَّةَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

“Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not dispute with one another, or you would be discouraged and weakened. Persevere! Surely Allah is with those who persevere.” (8:46)

So اختلاف is not “harmless,” rather it is a سبب (cause) of failure and weakness—when it is اختلاف (difference) that comes from ignorance and lack of scholarly reference.

Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained clearly how this disaster begins: it begins when scholars die, and then ignorance becomes leadership, and fatwa is given without knowledge, causing misguidance for oneself and others:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ انْتِزَاعًا يَنْتَزِعُهُ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ بِقَبْضِ الْعُلَمَاءِ حَتَّى إِذَا لَمْ يُبْقِ
عَالِمًا أَخَذَ النَّاسُ زُؤُسًا جَهَالًا فَسُئِلُوا فَأَفْتَوْا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ فَضَلُّوا وَأَضَلُّوا

Narrated Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-`As: I heard Allah’s Messenger ﷺ saying: “Allah does not take away the knowledge by taking it away from (the hearts of) the people, but (He) takes it away by the death of the religious learned men till when none of the (religious learned men) remains, people will take as their leaders ignorant persons who when consulted will give their verdict without knowledge. So they will go astray and will lead the people astray.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 100)

So the Prophet ﷺ connected the loss of scholars to the loss of knowledge, and connected the loss of knowledge to fatwa without knowledge, and connected fatwa without knowledge to misguidance and leading others astray. This is the exact meaning of: “If the scholars are lost, evil and اختلاف (differences) occur.”

And from the greatest evidences of the status of scholars is that the Prophet ﷺ clarified that they are the heirs of the Prophets, and that knowledge is the true inheritance—so whoever loses that inheritance loses a great deal (of good):

وَعَنْ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ

مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَبْتَغِي فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ، وَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَتَضَعُ أجنحتها رِضًا

لِطَالِبِ الْعِلْمِ، وَإِنَّ طَالِبَ الْعِلْمِ يَسْتَعْفِرُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ حَتَّى الْجِبَّتَانِ فِي الْمَاءِ، وَإِنَّ فَضْلَ الْعَالِمِ عَلَى الْعَابِدِ كَفَضْلِ الْقَمَرِ عَلَى سَائِرِ الْكَوَاكِبِ، وَإِنَّ الْعُلَمَاءَ هُمْ وَرَثَةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ، وَإِنَّ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ لَمْ يُورَثُوا دِينَارًا وَلَا دِرْهَمًا، إِنَّمَا وَرَثُوا الْعِلْمَ، فَمَنْ أَخَذَهُ أَخَذَ بِحِطِّ وَافِرٍ

Abu Darda' (رضي الله عنه) reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying: "He who follows a path in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make a path to Paradise easy for him. The angels lower their wings for the seeker of knowledge, pleased with what he does. Those in the heavens and the earth, even the fish in the water, seek forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge. The superiority of the learned man over the devout is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars. The learned are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets leave neither dinar nor dirham; they leave only knowledge, and he who takes it takes an abundant portion." (Abu Dawud; At-Tirmidhi — as cited in Riyad as-Salihin 1388)

So the scholars do not merely "know information"—rather they carry the inheritance of Prophethood: guidance, clarification, and protection from misguidance. And therefore when they are lost, evil spreads and اختلاف becomes dominant. And this was understood clearly by the Salaf. They did not see the death of a scholar as a small matter, but as a breach in Islam itself:

عَنِ الْحَسَنِ الْبَصْرِيِّ، قَالَ

كَانُوا يَقُولُونَ: مَوْتُ الْعَالِمِ تُلْمَةٌ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ لَا يَسُدُّهَا شَيْءٌ مَا اخْتَلَفَ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ

Al-Hasan al-Basri said: "They used to say: The death of a scholar is a breach in Islam which nothing can fill so long as the night and day continue to alternate." (Reported by Ahmad in az-Zuhd no. 1478; and ad-Darimi in his Sunan 1/351 no. 333)

And Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله placed the matter even more plainly: the sign of the people's destruction is the destruction of their scholars:

وَقَالَ سَعِيدُ بْنُ جُبَيْرٍ رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ، لَمَّا قِيلَ لَهُ: مَا عَلَامَةُ هَلَاقِ النَّاسِ؟ قَالَ

هَلَاقُ عُلَمَائِهِمْ

Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله said, when he was asked: "What is the sign of the destruction of the people?" He said: "The destruction of their scholars."

Benefit #2

**Allah does not remove knowledge by “snatching it” from hearts;
rather He removes it by the death of the scholars.**

Ignorance is not a neutral state—it is a doorway to evil, differences, and misguidance. This is why Allah placed the principle of returning to knowledge and its people:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ ۖ فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

"And We sent not before you except men to whom We revealed/inspired [Our message]. So ask the people of the message if you do not know." (16:43)

So the default condition of the believer is not to speak from assumption, nor to move upon ignorance, but to ask أهل الذكر (the people of remembrance/knowledge) and this itself shows that knowledge has carriers, and that guidance is tied to them by Allah’s decree.

Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained a tremendous reality: that Allah does not remove this knowledge from the Ummah by suddenly extracting it from the chest, but by a means—the death of the scholars. So when they go, the “public reference” of revelation and sound understanding is lost, and the Ummah becomes exposed and vulnerable.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ انْتِزَاعًا يَنْتَزِعُهُ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ بِقَبْضِ الْعُلَمَاءِ حَتَّى إِذَا لَمْ يَبْقَ عَالِمًا اتَّخَذَ النَّاسُ رُءُوسًا جُهَالًا فَسُئِلُوا فَأَفْتَوْا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ فَضَلُّوا وَأَضَلُّوا

Narrated Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-`As: I heard Allah’s Messenger ﷺ saying, “Allah does not take away the knowledge, by taking it away from (the hearts of) the people, but takes it away by the death of the religious learned men till when none of the (religious learned men) remains, people will take as their leaders ignorant persons who when consulted will give their verdict without knowledge. So they will go astray and will lead the people astray.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 100)

So the hadith establishes—step by step—that the Ummah’s corruption begins with a quiet calamity: the loss of scholars, then the rise of ignorant heads, then fatwa without knowledge, then misguidance for oneself and for others. This is why the believer must fear the death of scholars, value them, and cling to their knowledge, understanding and guidance while they are present.

And this same meaning is also narrated in Sahih Muslim, clarifying the same chain: removal of scholars → ignorant leadership → verdicts without knowledge → misguidance:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ انْتِزَاعًا يَنْتَزِعُهُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ، وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ بِقَبْضِ الْعُلَمَاءِ، فَإِذَا لَمْ يُبْقِ عَالِمًا اتَّخَذَ النَّاسُ رُءُوسًا جُهَالًا، فَسُئِلُوا فَأَفْتَوْا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ، فَضَلُّوا وَأَضَلُّوا

'Abdullah b. 'Amr b. al-'As reported Allah's Messenger ﷺ as saying: “Verily, Allah does not take away knowledge by snatching it from the people but He takes away knowledge by taking away the scholars, so that when He leaves no learned person, people turn to the ignorant as their leaders; then they are asked to deliver religious verdicts and they deliver them without knowledge, they go astray, and lead others astray.”

So the “snatching” that people imagine is not the Sunnah of Allah regarding knowledge; rather, Allah’s Sunnah is that knowledge is lifted when its carriers are lifted—and therefore the greatest protection is to keep returning to sound scholarship and to guard the دين from the جاهل who speaks in Allah’s name without proof.

This is exactly why the Salaf treated the death of a scholar as a disaster for the Ummah, not merely a personal loss—because it is the loss of a gate of guidance and a barrier against ignorance. From this, the believer understands why evil, differences, and misguidance spread when scholarship disappears.

So the removal of scholars is not a small matter. It is a removal of understanding, sound deduction, and haqq of the Sunnah. When they are present, innovations are exposed early. When they are absent, deviations become normalized.

This is why the Prophet ﷺ explained the great status of scholars: they are not merely “teachers,” but the inheritors of Prophets—meaning that through them the guidance of Prophets remains alive in the Ummah.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

وَعَنْ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ

وَإِنَّ الْعُلَمَاءَ هُمْ وَرَثَةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ، وَإِنَّ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ لَمْ يُورَثُوا دِينَارًا وَلَا دِرْهَمًا، إِنَّمَا وَرَثُوا الْعِلْمَ ...

“...The Scholars/learned are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets leave neither dinar nor dirham; they leave only knowledge...” (Abu Dawud; At-Tirmidhi — as cited in Riyad as-Salihin 1388)

This is why when they die, the Ummah is not losing “individuals” but losing the inheritance itself.

So the meaning is established: knowledge is not removed by a sudden emptiness inside every chest, but Allah removes knowledge by removing those who carry it, preserve it, and teach it. And once they are gone, the Ummah becomes vulnerable to misguidance, differences, and fatwa without knowledge—may Allah protect the Ummah of Muhammad So this benefit becomes clear: when scholars are present, the Ummah has its protection and clarity. But when scholars are lost, the people will still seek guidance—yet they will take ignorant leaders, and that becomes the beginning of widespread misguidance, corrupted fatwa, and اختلاف (differences) [division and disputes]—and Allah is the One whose aid is sought, Amin!

Benefit #3

When no scholar remains, people will take ignorant leaders.

This benefit exposes one of the most dangerous realities for the Ummah: that when the true علماء (scholars) are lost, the الناس (people and general public) do not remain neutral—they search for someone to lead them, speak for them, and answer their questions. If they do not find qualified scholars, they will appoint رؤوسا جهالا (ignorant heads/leaders—people who have put themselves in front, or who carry influence, or who have beautified speech, perhaps confidence, or popularity, but not sound knowledge of revelation and correct understanding.

And Allah has established the أصل (foundation/principle) that ignorance must return to knowledge, and not the other way around. So when the Ummah abandons this command—asking the scholars—then the Ummah begins to replace them with unqualified voices, and this is where the فساد (corruption) begins.

And Allah also warned against spreading matters without returning them to those capable of true deduction and correct understanding:

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ ۖ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

“And when there comes to them information about security or fear, they spread it. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then those who can draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it. Had it not been for the favour of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have followed Shaytan—except for a few.” (4:83)

So the Ummah must refer back to those who “can draw correct conclusions” (يستنبطونه) [deduce correctly from the evidences]—because without that, rumor spreads, fear spreads, and falsehood becomes normal.

So the Prophet ﷺ did not only warn that ignorance would exist—rather he warned that ignorance would become leadership. And this is one of the greatest calamities: that the دين becomes spoken about by those who do not know, and the people follow them because they appear as “heads” and “references.”

So the beginning of widespread فساد (corruption) is not that people necessarily stop caring about the religion—rather it is that religion becomes strange, and the sound طريق (path/way) becomes hidden among the voices of ignorance, the calls of desires and innovations and the confusion of disputes between groups and sects.

The Salaf (the righteous predecessors) knew that the destruction of people began by losing its scholars, because once they are gone, nothing remains to stop ignorant leadership, desires and innovations from spreading.

The Prophet ﷺ informed us that Islam itself will return to being غريب (strange), those who remain firm upon the truth will appear as “strangers” in the midst of misguidance:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ

بَدَأَ الْإِسْلَامُ غَرِيبًا، وَسَيَعُودُ غَرِيبًا كَمَا بَدَأَ، فَطُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ

Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Islam began as something strange and will return to being strange as it began, so glad tidings to the strangers.” (Sahih Muslim)

So even when the scholars are lost and ignorance rises, the دين does not vanish from the earth entirely, rather Allah preserves a people upon الحق (the truth/correct religion), and they are the غُرَبَاءُ (strangers) [those who remain firm upon ittibaa’a of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when it becomes strange]—they cling to the Book and the Sunnah, and they refuse to follow the ignorant heads even if the people follow them.

Therefore, the Ummah’s safety is not found in كثرة (numbers) [majority], nor in loud speech, nor in unqualified leadership—rather it is found in returning to knowledge and its people while they are present, and in remaining firm upon the Sunnah when it becomes “strange” among the people. And Allah is the One whose aid is sought.

Benefit #4

They will give fatwa without knowledge.

the inevitable result is that these leaders will begin speaking in the دين without knowledge—and the greatest form of this is issuing fatwa without knowledge.

And this is not a “small mistake.” Fatwa is speech on behalf of Allah, clarifying what He has made halal and haram, what is correct and incorrect, what is Sunnah and what is bid’ah. So if it is done without knowledge, it becomes widespread corruption.

Allah warned severely against speaking about Him without knowledge:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ وَأَلْبِئْمَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Say, ‘O Prophet,’ ‘My Lord has only forbidden open and secret indecencies, sin, unjust aggression, associating with Allah what He has sent down no authority for, and saying about Allah what you do not know.’” (7:33)

So Allah placed “saying about Allah what you do not know” as a عزيمة (great/severe) prohibition, alongside the worst of sins. In fact it is the worst of sins! This proves that speaking about Allah without knowledge is not light—it is a path to shirk, misguidance, and destruction.

And Allah clarified that the believer must not follow speech without knowledge:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

“Do not follow what you have no knowledge of. Surely the hearing, sight, and the القلب will all be questioned.” (17:36)

So if a Muslim is forbidden from following matters without knowledge, then how much more severe is the one who speaks, commands, and gives verdicts without knowledge?

Then Allah warned against attributing things to Him—halal and haram—without proof:

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هَذَا حَلَالٌ وَهَذَا حَرَامٌ لِّتَفْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ

“Do not say—falsely describing with your tongues—‘This is lawful and that is unlawful,’ fabricating a lie against Allah. Those who fabricate lies against Allah will never succeed.” (16:116)

So the one who gives fatwa without knowledge risks falling into this very matter: making claims of halal and haram without proof, which is lying upon Allah.

Then comes the explicit prophetic explanation of how this happens in the Ummah: it is tied to the loss of scholars, the rise of ignorant heads, and then fatwa without knowledge. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ انْتِزَاعًا يَنْتَزِعُهُ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ بِقَبْضِ الْعُلَمَاءِ حَتَّى إِذَا لَمْ يُبْقِ
عَالِمًا أَخَذَ النَّاسُ زُؤُوسًا جُهَالًا فَسُئِلُوا فَأَفْتَوْا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

Narrated Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-`As: I heard Allah’s Messenger saying: “...till when none of the religious learned men remains, people will take as their leaders ignorant persons who when consulted will give their verdict without knowledge...” (Sahih al-Bukhari 100)

So the Prophet ﷺ described the exact chain: they are asked, then they answer, then they issue verdicts, but it is without knowledge, without proof, without understanding.

And this is why the Ummah must fear the جاهل (ignorant person) and unqualified speaker who rushes into fatwa, and must honor the scholar who fears Allah, pauses, and speaks only with evidence.

So when scholars are lost, fatwa without knowledge rises, and this becomes a direct reason for misguidance and division. And this is also why Islam returns to being غريب (strange) [unfamiliar]: because the people become surrounded by voices that speak without knowledge, while the people of truth become few and appear strange.

Therefore, the Muslim who wants safety must measure speech with evidence, and must fear saying “Allah said” without proof— and more importantly without correct understanding because fatwa without knowledge is not only personal misguidance, but a door to destroying others and the Ummah as well.

Benefit #5

So they will go astray and lead others astray.

This benefit is the terrifying conclusion of the entire chain: when scholars are lost, ignorant leaders are taken, and fatwa is given without knowledge, the inevitable outcome is not merely “mistakes”—rather it is misguidance and going astray from the truth and even worse, misguiding others until it compounds.

And this is why ignorance is from the greatest causes of corruption and harm in the Ummah.

As mentioned, Allah warned against speaking without knowledge because it is a direct path to corruption and deviation, saying:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالنَّبْيَ بَعِيرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Say, ‘O Prophet,’ ‘My Lord has only forbidden open and secret indecencies, sin, unjust aggression, associating with Allah what He has sent down no authority for, and saying about Allah what you do not know.’” (7:33)

So Allah placed “saying about Allah what you do not know” as the greatest prohibition! Because it is a root-cause that leads to all that is evil including misguidance for the speaker and those who follow him.

And Allah also warned that people should never be followed blindly without returning disputes to revelation, because when disputes are not returned back to Allah and His Messenger, deviation grows:

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

“O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Should you disagree on anything, then refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you ‘truly’ believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is the best and fairest resolution.” (4:59) So when people abandon this return, and instead follow ignorant heads, the result becomes ضلال (misguidance and deviation—and that misguidance spreads through the Ummah.

Benefit #6

Shirk did not occur among the people of Prophet Nuh (alayhi salam) except after the loss of the scholars.

This benefit is a عظيمة (great/tremendous) proof that one of the greatest protections for Tawhid is the presence of علماء (scholars) who teach, cultivate, nurture and forbid evil, block its beginnings, and cut off the gradual traps of Shaytan before they grow into shirk.

So the Shaykh’s point is not merely historical storytelling. Rather, it is establishing a rule: that shirk does not usually enter a people or community suddenly, but it enters after sound religious knowledge is lost, and after the voices of correction and prohibition disappear. When scholars remain, they extinguish the seed of shirk before it ever becomes association.

Allah mentioned the very names that were later worshipped besides Him, showing that this matter was real, and that these were symbols of righteous people that became objects of devotion:

وَقَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلَا سُوَاعًا وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا

“And they said, ‘Do not abandon your gods. And do not abandon Wadd, nor Suwa’, nor Yaghuth, and Ya’uq, and Nasr.’” (71:23)

Allah Himself explained that they had specific names and idols that were worshipped besides Allah. And He sent Prophet Nuh (alayhi salam) as a caller to Tawhid, and that his mission was to warn against this shirk:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ

“Indeed, We sent Nuh to his people. He said, ‘O my people! Worship Allah—you have no god other than Him.’” (7:59)

Now the key point of the Shaykh—“shirk did not occur among the people of Nuh except after the loss of the scholars”—matches exactly what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ established in a general principle: that knowledge is removed by the death of scholars, and when knowledge is removed, misguidance spreads.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ:
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ انْتِزَاعًا يَنْتَزِعُهُ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ بِقَبْضِ الْعُلَمَاءِ

Narrated Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-`As: I heard Allah’s Messenger saying: “Allah does not take away knowledge by snatching it away from the people, but takes it away by the death of the scholars...” (Sahih al-Bukhari 100)

So when ilm is lost, and scholars are gone, then people become vulnerable—especially in the greatest foundation of all foundations: Tawhid.

And the danger is that shirk, by way of shaytan’s plots and plans often begins under a “good-looking” banner. It begins as remembrance, respect, symbolism, and love of the righteous—but without knowledge, these doors become openings to worship besides Allah.

This is exactly why Allah forbade every means that leads to shirk, and why the Sunnah closed these pathways from their very first step.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لَا تُظْرُونِي كَمَا أَظَرَتِ النَّصَارَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ، فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا عَبْدٌ، فَقُولُوا: عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ

“Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians exaggerated in praising the son of Maryam. For I am only a servant, so say: The servant of Allah and His Messenger.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

So the Prophet ﷺ blocked exaggeration religious extremism because it is a gateway that leads step-by-step into shirk, just as it happened in earlier nations.

So this benefit stands as a warning: protecting Tawhid is not only by rejecting idols after they appear, but by preserving knowledge, honoring scholars, and blocking the early “harmless” steps that Shaytan uses to plant shirk among the people.

Benefit #7

Shaytan made it appear good to them.

This benefit is a foundational in understanding how misguidance spreads: that Shaytan does not usually invite a people to open disbelief and shirk in the beginning. Rather, he begins by beautifying and making evil appear good—so the heart accepts the first step, thinking it is خير (good) righteous, harmless, or even beneficial.

So the Shaykh’s statement “Shaytan made it appear good to them” is not just describing the people of Prophet Nuh alayhi salam; it is exposing the very strategy of Shaytan in every era: that he corrupts the Din by changing how the act is seen before he changes how the act is done.

And Allah, the Exalted, explicitly affirmed this reality: that Shaytan beautifies deeds for people, so they walk toward misguidance while thinking they are upon guidance.

Allah said:

وَكَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ أَوْلَادِهِمْ شُرَكَاؤُهُمْ لِيُزِدُوهُمْ وِلْيَابِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرُهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ

“And likewise, their شركاء (partners/shayatin) have made the killing of their children appealing to many of the polytheists, so that they may ruin them and confuse for them their religion. Had Allah willed, they would not have done it. So leave them and what they invent.” (6:137)

So Allah described تزيين (beautification) and making evil look attractive as a cause that leads people to ruin and to confusion in the Din. And Allah also described that the one whose deeds are beautified will think he is doing well, even while he is destroyed:

أَفَمَن زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَتٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

“Is the one whose evil deeds are made appealing to him so that he considers them good ‘like the rightly guided’? Surely Allah leaves to stray whoever He wills and guides whoever He wills. So do not grieve yourself to death over

them. Surely Allah knows best what they do.” (35:8)

So the danger is not only committing evil—but committing evil while believing it is good. And this is from the strongest forms of misguidance, because the person does not seek repentance from what he believes is righteousness.

Now, pause for a minute and think about the condition and state of the misguided individual who presents himself to the people and public as someone of knowledge, while he is not upon knowledge. Shaytan beautifies for him his speech and his path, so he speaks confidently, issues fatwa, and decorates falsehood with eloquence and outward religiosity—until he imagines that he is calling to guidance, while in reality he is calling to misguidance.

So he becomes from the people described by the Prophet ﷺ: those who are taken as ignorant heads/leaders, who are asked and then answer, giving verdicts without proofs, evidences and understanding—the end result is that they themselves go astray and they lead others astray: “...people will take as their leaders ignorant persons who when consulted will give their verdict without knowledge. So they will go astray and will lead others astray.”

So the disaster is not limited to his own soul. Rather, his misguidance becomes “guidance” in the eyes of others, because his evil was beautified to him first—then it became beautified through him to the people. And this is one reason why the Ummah is commanded to return to the people of knowledge, the true scholars, and not to be deceived by appearances, popularity, loud or beautified speech. Allah also made clear that Shaytan beautifies deeds and speech and presents himself as a “sincere advisor,” while he is the greatest enemy:

وَأَذْرَبْنَاهُمْ لِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَعْمَلُنَا لَهُمْ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَحْبِبُونَهُمْ وَقَالَ لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ مِنَّا وَإِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ فَلَمَّا تَرَأَتْ
الْفِئْتَانِ أَنْ سَعِىَ عَلَيْهِ وَقَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنْكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ
الْعِقَابِ

“And ‘remember’ when Shaytan made their deeds appealing to them and said, ‘No one can defeat you today, and I am your protector.’ But when the two armies met, he ran away and said, ‘I have nothing to do with you. I can see what you cannot see. I truly fear Allah.’ And Allah is شديد العقاب (severe in punishment).” (8:48)

So Shaytan beautifies, promises support, then abandons, and the people are left in ruin. This is his method. And this is why the scholars—when present—are a barrier against this deception, because they do not judge deeds by feelings and appearances, but by evidence. That is why Allah commanded that disputes and confusing matters be returned back to revelation and to those who can truly derive and understand:

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ سَوَّلُوا لَهُ رَدُّهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِنِّي أُولَى الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ
الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ

“And when there comes to them information about security or fear, they spread it. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then those who can draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it...” (4:83)

So when the scholars are absent and knowledge is lost, the Ummah becomes exposed to beautification and deception, because people begin to treat “what feels good” as “what is true,” and that is exactly how the people of Prophet Nuh alayhi salam were trapped: not by being told “worship idols” at the start, but by being told “this is خير (good).”

And this is why the Prophet ﷺ taught the Ummah to fear newly invented matters, because they often begin as something “good-looking”:

وَسَرَّ الْأُمُورَ مُخَدَّاتُهَا، وَكُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ

“...and the worst of matters are those newly invented, and every innovation is misguidance.” (Sahih Muslim)

So the evil of bid‘ah does not appear ugly (at least in the beginning)—rather it appears beautified, then it becomes normalized, and then it becomes worship and religion.

Therefore, this benefit teaches that one of the greatest protections from Shaytan is not only rejecting open falsehood, but rejecting the beautified beginnings of falsehood—measuring every act of “religion” by Qur’an and Sunnah upon the understanding of the Salaf, before it becomes a path that leads to shirk, bid‘ah and destruction.

Benefit #8

Shaytan suggested to them that they make images of the righteous.

This benefit exposes a decisive principle in the entry of shirk/**how shirk enters a people**: that Shaytan often begins with something that looks like “honoring and respecting the righteous”, “love for them”, or “remembering their good”—but he intends by it to corrupt Tawhid in the slave, step-by-step, until that remembrance becomes a doorway to worship others besides Allah.

So Shaytan did not begin by saying, “Worship them.” Rather, he began by saying: “Make images of the righteous.” This first step appears harmless to the people, even “good,” because it resembles remembrance and inspiration. But this is exactly the trap: an action that is not worship in its outward form/appearance becomes the seed of worship in its end result.

And these images were not simply “art” or “remembering the righteous,” but gods taken besides Allah.

And Allah clarified that Nuh (alayhi salam) was sent to destroy this very foundation, and to call them back to Tawhid:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَتَقَوْمِ آغْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ

“Indeed, We sent Nuh to his people. He said, ‘O my people! Worship Allah—you have no god other than Him.’” (7:59)

So the disease was shirk, and the cure was Tawhid.

But how did they arrive at committing shirk? The Shaykh explained the beginning: Shaytan suggested that they make images of the righteous. And this meaning is established in the Sunnah: that the beginning of shirk among earlier nations was connected to images and graves, and the exaggeration of the righteous.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لَا تُظْرُونِي كَمَا أَظْرَبَتِ النَّصَارَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ، فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا عَبْدٌ، فَقُولُوا: عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ

“Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians exaggerated in praising the son of Maryam. For I am only a servant, so say: The servant of Allah and His Messenger.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

So the Prophet ﷺ forbade الغلو (exaggeration and religious extremism) in praising, because it is a road that later becomes worship besides Allah—just as the Christians began with praise and ended with worship.

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ also cursed those who turned graves into places of worship, which shows how images, structures, and “memorializing the righteous” becomes a pathway to shirk:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ وَعَبِيدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، قَالَا: لَمَّا نَزَلَ بِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ طِفِقَ يَطْرُحُ
خَمِيضَةً لَهُ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ، فَإِذَا اغْتَمَّ بِهَا كَشَفَهَا، فَقَالَ وَهُوَ كَذَلِكَ
لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْيَهُودِ وَالنَّصَارَى اتَّخَذُوا قُبُورَ أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ مَسَاجِدَ

Narrated A'ishah and Abdullah ibn `Abbas (رضي الله عنهم): When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was on his deathbed, he started putting a woolen sheet over his face, and when he became distressed, he removed it and said while in that state: “May Allah curse the Jews and the Christians, for they took the graves of their Prophets as masajid.” (Sahih al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim)

So the Prophet ﷺ warned his Ummah at the time of death from the very door that led earlier nations into shirk: turning remembrance of the righteous into places and forms of worship.

And this shows the precision of the Shaykh’s lesson: that shirk enters through steps, and the first step often appears like “honoring righteousness.” This is why the people of Sunnah do not only forbid shirk after it appears, but they also forbid the means and pathways to shirk.

So any Shaytan’s suggestion— in this example, making images of righteous people—was not innocent. It was the first link in a chain that ends in worship besides Allah. And it is prohibited to follow the footsteps of shaytan.

Benefit #9

Shaytan makes a means of “encouragement in worship” into a doorway to shirk.

This benefit exposes one of the most deceptive paths and strategies of Shaytan: that he may invite a people to something that appears to be an increase in worship (more worship and eagerness), and he packages it as motivation, remembrance, inspiration, and “softening the heart”—but his true هدف (goal and objective) is not that they worship Allah more; rather it is that he corrupts their worship and eventually turns it into shirk.

So the people of Prophet Nuh (alayhi salam) were told: make images of the righteous so that remembering them will encourage you to worship more. The ظاهر (appearance) and outer form looks righteous, but the outcome is destruction.

This is why Allah made the دين (Din) based on اتباع (following the Prophet(s)) and not based on innovations and desires e.g., what people “feel is helpful or good.” The معيار (standard and measure) is proof, not emotional effect.

Allah said:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

“This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen Islam as your religion.” (5:3)

So the religion is complete. Therefore, no one needs to add “motivational tools” or “feel good effects” into worship that Allah did not legislate.

And Allah commanded that worship and obedience must be only upon what Allah revealed, not upon invented routes:

اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۗ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ

“Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord, and do not follow any allies besides Him. Little do you remember.” (7:3) So “encouragement” is not an excuse to invent forms of religion. The correct encouragement is to follow the Qur’an and Sunnah.

Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave the most foundational warning in this باب (chapter/topic): that newly invented matters are the worst of matters, even if people believe they are “good deeds”:

وَمَسْرُ الْأُمُورِ مُحَدَّثَاتُهَا، وَكُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ

“...and the worst of matters are those newly invented, and every innovation is misguidance.” (Sahih Muslim)

So even if a person says: “This makes us love worship,” or “This helps the heart,” if it is not legislated, then it is misguidance—because it opens a door that Allah and His Messenger ﷺ did not open.

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ also laid down the criterion that worship must be based on revelation, not on feelings or intentions alone:

مَنْ أَحَدَثَ فِي أَمْرِنَا هَذَا مَا لَيْسَ مِنْهُ فَهُوَ رَدٌّ

“Whoever introduces into this matter of ours that which is not from it, it is rejected.” (Sahih al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim)

So even if the intention is “encouragement,” if the action is not from the دين, it is rejected and becomes a path to misguidance.

And this is the same doorway that led the people of Prophet Nuh **alayhi salam** into shirk: it began as “encouragement to worship” and ended as worship besides Allah. Allah mentioned their idols by name:

وَقَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلَا سُوَاعًا وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا

“And they said, ‘Do not abandon your gods. And do not abandon Wadd, nor Suwa’, nor Yaghuth, and Ya’uq, and Nasr.’” (71:23) So what began as “remembrance and motivation” became “gods besides Allah.”

And the Prophet ﷺ sealed this door/pathway by forbidding exaggeration of the righteous, even regarding himself, because it begins with “love” and ends with shirk:

لَا تُظْرُونِي كَمَا أَطْرَبَ النَّصَارَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ، فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا عَبْدٌ، فَقُولُوا: عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ

“Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians exaggerated in praising the son of Maryam. For I am only a servant, so say: The servant of Allah and His Messenger.” (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Therefore this benefit teaches that one of Shaytan’s greatest traps is by not making evil look ugly—rather he makes it look like خير (good and righteous), and he makes bid’ah look like worship, whereas bid’ah is not worship. And he makes a “means” of encouragement become a gateway to shirk. So the protection is to worship Allah only upon the Sunnah, and to reject every newly invented path even if people call to it, deem it good and encourage it.

And this is exactly why the Salaf (the righteous predecessors) were شديد (strict/firm) regarding innovations and newly invented practices, because they knew that the Din is complete, and that Shaytan only succeeds by adding “extra doors” to worship that Allah never legislated.

So they would constantly return the people and public to the foundations and principles and that the religion needs no additions after perfection.

Allah said:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

“This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen Islam as your religion.” (5:3)

So when the دين is perfected, then anything “added” as religion is not perfection—it is a نقص (deficiency) and a claim that something is missing, even if the person does not realize it.

And this is why ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud رضي الله عنه laid down one of the greatest Salafi foundations in this topic: that the correct path is to follow and not to invent.

He said:

اتَّبِعُوا وَلَا تَبْتَدِعُوا فَقَدْ كُفَيْتُمْ

“Follow, and do not innovate, for you have been sufficed.”

So he connected two truths together:

- “اتَّبِعُوا” (follow) [cling to the Sunnah]
- “كُفَيْتُمْ” (you have been sufficed) [the دين is enough—no addition is needed]

when the Salaf saw people rushing into “new acts” that were not from the Sunnah, they did not praise them for their emotion or “increased worship,” because they understood that deeds are not accepted except by following the Messenger ﷺ. Furthermore, the great treat that awaits anyone who does so:

Allah said:

فَلْيَخْذِرِ الَّذِينَ يَخْلِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“So let those beware who oppose/go against his command, lest a fitnah afflict them or a painful punishment afflict them.” (24:63)

Opposing/going against the Sunnah is not safe; in truth/reality it is the worst thing you can do—even if the act looks “beautiful” or “encouraging.” And this is why the Salaf also feared the “small beginnings” of innovation, because they knew that bid‘ah begins as something small and beloved, then grows until it becomes دين (religion) and worship, and then it becomes shirk or leads to it.

This principle was stated with crystal clarity by al-Imam al-Barbahari رحمه الله in Sharh as-Sunnah, when he said:

وَأَعْلَمُ أَنَّ صِغَارَ الْبِدَعِ تَعُودُ حَتَّى تَصِيرَ كِبَارًا، وَكَذَلِكَ كُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ أُخِدَّتْ فِي هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ كَانَ أَوَّلُهَا صَغِيرًا يُشْبِهُ الْحَقَّ، فَأَغْتَرَّ بِهَا مَنْ دَخَلَ فِيهَا، ثُمَّ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعِ الْخُرُوجَ مِنْهَا، فَعَظُمَتْ وَصَارَتْ دِينًا يَدَانِ بِهِ

“Know that small innovations return until they become big. And likewise every innovation introduced in this Ummah began as something small resembling the truth, so whoever entered into it was deceived by it, then he was unable to exit from it, so it grew until it became a religion that people worship Allah with.”

So this is the Sunnah of Shaytan: he does not begin with the final goal and objective, but he begins with what resembles truth, until the people become trapped in a “religion” that Allah did not legislate.

And this is exactly what happened to the people of Prophet Nuh (alayhi salam): the first step was not worship, but “remembrance.” Then it grew into symbols, then practices, then devotion—until it became full shirk. And we all know what happened to them.

Benefit #10

Shaytan waited until the scholars died—then he commanded worship, and shirk and destruction occurred.

This is one of the greatest proofs that Shaytan is patient, strategic, and gradual in corrupting the religion e.g., worship and belief. He does not rush the people to the final crime while the barriers of knowledge and correction still exist. Rather, he plants the seed, normalizes the act, waits for the opportunity e.g., the scholars/people of knowledge to disappear, and only then he brings the people from “remembrance” to acts of worship besides Allah.

And this is why Allah made the removal of scholars a calamity upon the Ummah: because when the العلماء (scholars) are present, they stop the beginnings before they grow, and they forbid the الوسائل (means/pathways) that lead to deviation and shirk.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained this Sunnah of Allah in the Ummah, that knowledge is removed through the death of scholars:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ انْتِزَاعًا يَنْتَزِعُهُ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنْ يَقْبِضُ الْعِلْمَ بِقَبْضِ الْعُلَمَاءِ حَتَّى إِذَا لَمْ يَبْقَ عَالِمًا اتَّخَذَ النَّاسُ رُءُوسًا جُهَالًا فَسُئِلُوا فَأَفْتَوْا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ فَضَلُّوا وَأَضَلُّوا

“Allah does not take away the knowledge by taking it away from (the hearts of) the people, but takes it away by the death of the religious learned men till when none of the religious learned men remains, people will take as their leaders ignorant persons who when consulted will give their verdict without knowledge. So they will go astray and will lead others astray.” (Sahih al-Bukhari 100)

So the Shaykh’s explanation is the تطبيق (application) and real example of this hadith: once scholars die, the people become vulnerable, the ignorant lead, and Shaytan finds a wide-open door.

Then Shaytan comes with the final lie, saying: “Your forefathers did not set up these images except to worship them.”

And this is exactly how innovation becomes religion it is inherited, normalized, and eventually presented as the original purpose.

So the images were no longer “images.” They became gods.

And Allah also clarified that this was the very reason destruction came upon them—because they rejected Tawhid and remained upon their shirk until the punishment descended:

“Because of their sins, they were drowned, then they were made to enter the Fire, and they found none to help them besides Allah.” (71:25)

And the Prophet ﷺ warned his Ummah with the strongest warning against the very doors that lead to shirk—especially exaggerating the righteous and turning their graves and symbols into places of devotion.

He ﷺ said:

لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْيَهُودِ وَالنَّصَارَى اتَّخَذُوا قُبُورَ أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ مَسَاجِدَ

“May Allah curse the Jews and the Christians, for they took the graves of their Prophets as masajid.” (Sahih al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim)

So he cursed the pathway, not only the final act—because the final act begins with a pathway, just as it began with the people of Prophet Nuh (alayhi salam).

And this is the conclusion of the Shaykh’s نصيحة (advice) and warning: that when scholars disappear, Shaytan’s door opens wider, and what was once rejected becomes normalized, and what was once “remembrance” becomes worship besides Allah—until destruction comes.

And in such times, the أهل السنة (people of Sunnah) [those who hold firmly to the Qur'an and Sunnah] become غُرَبَاء (strangers) [rare and unfamiliar], as the Prophet ﷺ foretold:

بَدَأَ الْإِسْلَامُ غَرِيبًا، وَسَيَعُودُ غَرِيبًا كَمَا بَدَأَ، فَطُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ

“Islam began as something strange and will return to being strange as it began, so glad tidings to the strangers.” (Sahih Muslim)

So glad tidings are for the one who holds firm to Tawhid, rejects every path to shirk, clings to Sunnah and the scholars while they are present—and when they are gone, he clings to the authentic Sunnah they preserved—until he meets Allah.