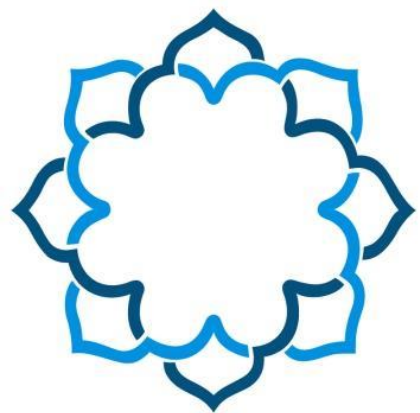




Understanding of the Salaf

By Shahbaz Ahmed Toor

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Last updated – 22/8/22

Introduction

All praise is due to Allah. And may the Salah and Salam be Upon our Prophet Muhammad , his Household and all of His Companions.

As for what proceeds:

This *Juz* by the will of Allah is being written after seeing the *Ummah* (Muslim nation) in such a state that seditions and trials have exceeded and Muslims don't know what to follow and whom to follow, the day you realise how dangerous it is to follow and listen to misguided people, you will never go near to them. On this account, we are writing this *Juz*, our work is nothing compared to the scholars who worked before us on this topic and it is another fact that upcoming scholars will do better work than us. May Allah accept it from us and them. Ameen!

Indeed misleading and deviated speakers are everywhere, you can't easily get rid of them, every other person you see will be probably following a misguided person. Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said , "What I fear the most for this *Ummah* is every knowledgeable hypocrite with a smooth tongue."¹

¹ Musnad Ahmad hadith 310 , Al-'Iraqi and Ahmed Shakir authenticated it

They convey falsehood in such a way that it sounds like an absolute truth, we seek refuge in Allah from such speakers and their falsehood. They are harmful for the Muslim *Ummah*, often when such people are propagated, laymen don't pay attention to the warnings of righteous scholars against such people but still the laymen due to the heedlessness and ignorance listen to them and get deviated. It is all because of conveyance of a message. Some people have first-rate speaking power that's how a falsehood can be shown as absolute truth. If it is appealing to human ears, ordinary people believe in it. Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "In some eloquent speech there is magic."²

What exactly happened was what ibn 'Umar narrated: Two men came from the East and addressed the people who wondered at their eloquent speeches on that Allah's Messenger said, Some eloquent speech is as effective as magic.³

Sheikh Saalih Aal ash-Shaykh commented,

"Beware of the opinions of people even if they Beautify them with speech" That is, do not turn away from the *Sunnah* because someone has beautified his opinion with words and expressions. Instead, adhere to the *Sunnah* and those who promote it even if they are not able to beautify their narrations. Because the scale of judgment is [the degree of following: whoever follows is successful and whoever innovates is destroyed - may Allah protect us from the paths of destruction."⁴

² Al-Bukhari: 5767, Abu Dawud: 5007 and Al-Muwatta of imam Malik: 2820

³ See foot note number 2

⁴ Sharh Lum'atul-I'tiqaad, Tape 772

Deceptive speakers are huge in number. Sadly , some of our brothers think that being huge in number is a *dalil* (evidence), but Qur'an says otherwise, Allah says in holy Qur'an:

وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا لَّيُضِلُّونَ بِأَهْوَاءِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

Translation:

And indeed do many lead [others] astray through their [own] inclinations without knowledge.⁵

Allah says,

وَمَا يَتَّبِعْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ
بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ

Translation:

And most of them follow not except assumption. Indeed, assumption avails not against the truth at all. Indeed, Allāh is Knowing of what they do.⁶

We should stick to the truth and not look at numbers, truth is not known by men but men are known by truth. Ibn al-Qayyim beautifully said, "The strangeness of Islām has intensified, the scholars are few (in number), and the foolish have overcome (the masses)."⁷

You should know who to follow and how to understand the text of Qur'an and *hadith*, the way which you are understanding them, is it

⁵ Qur'an surah al-anam ayah 119

⁶ Surah Yusuf ayah 36

⁷ «اشتدت غربة الإسلام وقل العلماء وغلب السفهاء»

Zaad al-Ma'ad, volume 3, page 433

what exactly Allah and his messenger said? Or is it misinterpretation? We have to understand the Qur'an the way our *salaf* (predecessors) understood and why is the understanding of our *salaf* important? To clarify, we need to know that Qur'an is revealed upon the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and he was the most knowledgeable regarding the Qur'an, he was teacher to his companions, he taught them Qur'an, the Qur'an transferred from Prophet (peace be upon him) to the companions, companions transferred to their students (*tabi'un*) and so on. Now their understanding of the Qur'an is most correct, whatever goes against their understanding is rejected. The path of the *Salaf* (pious predecessors) is safer, more knowledge based, And wiser.

Misleading, deceptive and ambiguous speakers are in that stage because they don't follow pious predecessors. Of course these speakers are not alone, they do have their misguided sects with them.

Fahm (understanding) of Salaf al-saliheen

Reason of the deviation of the sects were incorrect understanding of *ayaat* and *ahadith*. To be on the correct path, we should abide by the people who were on the correct and straight path (الصرّاط المستقيم)⁸

Just seeing someone is quoting *ayaat* and *ahadith* is not a proof what he is saying is truth, you should know that all the sects have done the same, they pick some *ayaat* and *ahadith*, misinterpret them and say “look we are quoting from Qur’an and *Sunnah*, how can we be wrong?”. Indeed the result they are deducting is wrong, it isn’t how the *salaf* understood, thus rejected.

Trait of *Ahlul bid’ah* (people of innovation) is that they follow *ayaat* which are *Mutashabih* (unclear) and they leave the *Muhkam* (clear) *ayaat*. About unclear *ayaat*, no one knows their true meaning except Allah. So what the *Ahlul bid’ah* do is, they alter and distort the meaning of the *ayaat* they want to deduct belief from. Since the *Ayah* was unclear, it was easy to change the meaning.

Allah says,

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ
مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ ۚ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ

⁸ Referring to Qur’an surah *al-fatiha*

1:6

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

(Guide us to the straight path)

وَأَتَّبِعْهُ تَأْوِيلَهُ ۚ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۚ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ
 ءَامَنَّا بِهِ ۚ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِندِ رَبِّنَا ۚ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ۙ⁹

It is He who has sent down to you, [O Muḥammad], the Book; in it are verses [that are] precise – they are the foundation of the Book – and others unspecific. As for those in whose hearts is deviation [from truth], they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation [suitable to them]. And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allāh. But those firm in knowledge say, “We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord.” And no one will be reminded except those of understanding.

Muhammad bin Ishaq bin Yasar commented,

مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ

(In it are verses that are entirely clear) as “Containing proof of the Lord, immunity for the servants and a refutation of opponents and of falsehood. They cannot be changed or altered from what they were meant for.” He also said, “As for the unclear *Ayaat*, they can (but must not) be altered and changed, and this is a test from Allah to the servants, just as He tested them with the allowed and prohibited things. So these *Ayaat* must not be altered to imply a false meaning or be distorted from the truth.”

Therefore, Allah said,

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ

⁹ Surah Al-Imran ayah 7

(So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation) meaning, those who are misguided and deviate from truth to falsehood,

فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَبَّهَ مِنْهُ

(they follow that which is not entirely clear thereof) meaning, they refer to the *Mutashabih*, because they are able to alter its meanings to conform with their false interpretation since the wordings of the *Mutashabihat* encompass such a wide area of meanings. As for the *Muhkam Ayaat*, they cannot be altered because they are clear and, thus, constitute unequivocal proof against the misguided people. This is why Allah said,

ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ

(seeking *Al-Fitnah*) meaning, they seek to misguide their following by pretending to prove their innovation by relying on the Qur'an – the *Mutashabih* of it – but, this is proof against and not for them. For instance, Christians might claim that `Isa is divine because the Qur'an states that he is *Ruhullah* and His Word, which He gave to Mary, all the while ignoring Allah's statements,

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ¹⁰

(He `Isa was not more than a servant. We granted Our favor to him.), and,

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ ءَادَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

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¹⁰ Qur'an 43:59

¹¹ Qur'an 3:59

(Verily, the likeness of `Isa before Allah is the likeness of Adam. He created him from dust, then (He) said to him: "Be!" and he was.)¹²

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said in *Tafsir* of the *Ayah* "As for those in whose hearts there is deviation, they follow that which is not entirely clear thereof", they are *khawarij*.¹³

Prophet (peace be upon him) heard some people disagreeing about the Qur'an and said, "It was just on this account that your predecessors perished: They set parts of Allah's Book against others, whereas Allah's Book was sent down only to be consistent; so do not use parts to falsify others. Speak about as much of it as you know, but where you are ignorant entrust it to him who knows."¹⁴

Ibn `Abbas said, "*Tafsir* is of four types: *Tafsir* that the Arabs know in their language; *Tafsir* that no one is excused of being ignorant of; *Tafsir* that the scholars know; and *Tafsir* that only Allah knows."¹⁵

Here are some examples of sects that were on misguidance but they deducted their beliefs from Qur'an and *ahadith* but they did not understand them as the *salaf* did. So they ended up in misguidance.

Let's begin with *Khawarij*, they pick some *ayaat* and declare Muslims to be *Kufaar*. Now they say the same that "we are just following what the Qur'an says" but in reality they are misunderstanding the Qur'an, when ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) was sent by

¹² Tafsir ibn kathir, under 3:7 to 3:9

¹³ Musnad Ahmad 22259, Hasan lidhaatih, according to Sheikh Zubair `Ali Zai

¹⁴ Musnad Ahmad 6741, Ibn Majah 85, Mishkat al-Masabih 237, Musanaff Abdul Razzaq 20367, Sound chain according to Sheikh Zubair `Ali Zai and Hafidh ibn Hajar Authentic according to Sheikh Ahmed Shakir

¹⁵ Al-Tabari 1/57

‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) to debate the *khawarij*, he said, “No one from them (the companions) is among you”¹⁶, he also said “they (the companions) know it (the Qur’an) better than you”¹⁷

Ibn ‘Abbas was trying to say, they understand Qur’an better than you, how can what you are deducting from the Qur’an be correct? Their understanding of Qur’an is correct, if you were on guidance then surely some of the companions would be among you but no one from them is among you, you are clearly on falsehood.

You have seen case of the *Khawarij*. As for *Mu’tazilah* and *Jahmiyyah*, they also claimed to follow Qur’an but no one from the *tabi’un* or *tabi at-tabi’un* were on their side, they said Allah is everywhere and they used this *ayah* as evidence

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ وَجَهْرَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا
تَكْسِبُونَ¹⁸

which means (And He is Allah in the heavens and on the earth; He knows what you conceal and what you reveal, and He knows what you earn.) but there is another *ayah* which explains it, it is

وَهُوَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَهٌُ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَهٌُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ¹⁹

¹⁶ Musanaff Abdul-Razzaq 18628, al-Nasai in Al-Kubra 8575, al-Hakim 2656 and he authenticated it and al-Dhahabi agreed with him. Sheikh Ghulam Mustafa Zaheer graded it’s chain sound

¹⁷ Same

¹⁸ Surah al-An’am 6

¹⁹ Surah az-Zukhruf ayah 84

Which means (And it is He [i.e., Allāh] who is [the only] deity in the heaven, and on the earth [the only] deity. And He is the Wise, the Knowing.)

As you saw, one *ayah* explained the other. This is the matter of the Qur'an, you can't cherry pick and deduct results, Qur'an has no contradictions, not a single *ayah* is against the other.

Jahmiyyah believed that Allah is everywhere and with us and in us (we seek refuge in Allah from such belief) and they used this *ayah* as evidence:

مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا
أَدْنَى مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا²⁰

Which means (There are not three in a private conversation but that He is the fourth of them, nor are there five but that He is the sixth of them – and no less than that and no more except that He is with them wherever they are.)

Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him) replied to *Jahmiyyah* with, “Then we said, Allah says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

“Do you not see that Allāh knows what is in the heavens and what is on earth?” (Al-Mujādilah 58:7)

Then He said: ,There is no private conversation of three except that He is the Fourth of them', i.e. by His Knowledge. ,Nor five except that He', i.e. by His Knowledge, ,Is the sixth of them.' This (all) Means by His

²⁰ Surah al-Mujadila Ayah 7

Knowledge regarding them (i.e. what they are Doing, saying, plotting etc.). ,No matter where they are. Then He Will inform them on the Day of Resurrection about what they did. Verily Allāh is All-Knowing about everything.' (Al Mujādilah 58:7) He started the *ayah* with (mentioning) His Knowledge and He ended the *ayah* by (mentioning) His Knowledge."²¹

You have clearly seen how these people misquote and misinterpret *ayaat* of Allah and claim to be following Qur'an. Here is the complete *ayah*:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ
 نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ذَلِكَ
 وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا ۖ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ ۚ إِنَّ
 اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

Have you not considered that Allāh knows what is in the heavens and what is on the earth? There are not three in a private conversation but that He is the fourth of them, nor are there five but that He is the sixth of them - and no less than that and no more except that He is with them [in knowledge] wherever they are. Then He will inform them of what they did, on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allāh is, of all things, Knowing.

These people follow that which is not clear, Narrated `Aisha: Allah's Messenger recited the *ayah*: -- "It is He who has sent down to you the Book. In it are Verses that are entirely clear, they are the foundation of

²¹ Al-radd 'ala al-Jahmiyyah wa al-Zanadiqah by Imam Ahmad, page 154

the Book, others not entirely clear. So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the Truth). Follow thereof that is not entirely clear seeking affliction and searching for its hidden meanings; but no one knows its hidden meanings but Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in it (i.e. in the Qur'an) the whole of it (i.e. its clear and unclear Verses) are from our Lord. And none receive admonition except men of understanding." (3.7)

Then Allah's Messenger said , "If you see those who follow thereof that is not entirely clear, then they are those whom Allah has named [as having deviation (from the Truth)] 'So beware of them.'"²²

Now that you have seen, correct understanding of *Qur'an* and *hadith* is very important. To know who to follow in *fahm*, we will be checking for evidences in the following texts:

- 1) Qur'an
- 2) Ahadith
- 3) Athaar

²² Al-Bukhari: 4547

Who to follow, what does the Qur'an say?

Allah says in holy Qur'an, surah al-nisa ayah 115:

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

Translation:

And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers - We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination.

Comments:

Allah threatens those who follow a different path to the companions with the punishment of hell. Not just companions but all the believers in general, *tabi'un*, *tabi' at-tabi'un* and so on. We have to follow the consensus of believers. Imam Al-Shafi'i (may Allah have mercy on him) has deducted evidence for *ijma'* (consensus) from this *ayah*.²³

At-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) commented,

ويتبع طريقاً غير طريق أهل التصديق، ويسلك منهاجاً غير منهاجهم، وذلك هو الكفر بالله،
لأن الكفر بالله ورسوله غير سبيل المؤمنين وغير منهاجهم.²⁴

²³ Al-Risala page 471

²⁴ Tafsir al-Tabari under 4:115

Translation:

And he follows a path other than the path of the believers, and he follows a methodology other than theirs, and that is disbelief in Allah, because disbelief in Allah and His Messenger is not following the path of the believers and their methodology.

‘Allama al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said regarding this *ayah*:

وعلى سبب ضلال كل الفرق قديماً وحديثاً، مع أنها كلها تدعي العمل بالكتاب والسنة، وسبب الضلال هو عدم الرجوع إلى ما كان عليه السلف الصالح.²⁵

Translation:

And the reason for the misguidance of all the sects, old and new, even though they all claim to practice according to the Qur’an and *Sunnah*, and the reason for misguidance is not returning to what the righteous predecessors (*salaf al-salih*) were upon.

Allah says in holy Qur’an, surah aal-Imran ayah 110:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ﷻ

Translation:

You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allāh.

²⁵ Duroos al-sheikh al-Albani, volume 8, page 8

Comments:

We have a beautiful *hadith* of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) in this regard, he said:

خَيْرُ النَّاسِ قَرْنِي، ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ، ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ، ثُمَّ يَجِيءُ أَقْوَامٌ تَسْبِقُ شَهَادَتَهُ
أَحَدِهِمْ يَمِينُهُ، وَيَمِينُهُ شَهَادَتُهُ.²⁶

Translation:

The people of my generation are the best, then those who follow them, and then those who follow the latter. After that there will come some people whose witness will go ahead of their oaths, and their oaths will go ahead of their witness.

He says in surah al-Tawbah ayah 110:

وَالسَّالِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ
رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

Translation:

And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhājireen and the Anṣār and those who followed them with good conduct – Allāh is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him

Comments:

²⁶ Sahih al-Bukhari: 2652, Muslim: 2533

Imam Malik used this *ayah* as an evidence for the obligation of following companions, may Allah be pleased with them.²⁷

Allah says in surah al-Baqarah ayah 137:

فَإِنْ ءَامَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا ءَامَنْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ فَقَدْ اهْتَدَوْا ۖ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ ۖ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

Translation:

So if they believe in the same as you believe in, then they have been [rightly] guided; but if they turn away, they are only in dissension, and Allāh will be sufficient for you against them. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

Allah says in surah Yusuf ayah 108:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي ۖ أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ ۚ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي ۖ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

Translation:

Say, “This is my way; I invite to Allāh with insight, I and those who follow me. And exalted is Allāh; and I am not of those who associate others with Him.”

²⁷ I’lam al-Muwaqqi’ in ‘an Rabb al-‘Alamin: Ibn Qayyim, volume 4, page 123

What does the Ahadith say?

It is clear from the *Sunnah* that we are obliged to follow companions of Prophet (peace be upon him), their successors (*tabi'un*), their successors (*tabi' at-tabi'un*) and *al-Jama'ah* (united Muslim community or main body) in general. Whoever goes against the *ijma'* (consensus) of Muslims is a innovator.

Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said , “After I am gone, you will see great conflict. I urge you to adhere to my *Sunnah* and the path of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, and cling stubbornly to it. And beware of newly-invented matters, for every innovation is a going astray.”²⁸

This is a great evidence on following Caliphs, we have another *hadith* on obligation of sticking to the *salaf*, Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, “I order you (to stick to) my Companions, then those who come after them (*tabi'un*), then those who come after them (*tabi' at-tabi'un*).”²⁹

He also said, “The people of my generation (companions) are the best, then those who follow them (*tabi'un*), and then those who follow the latter(*tabi' tabi'un*).”³⁰

²⁸ Ibn Majah: 42 – its chain is sound according to Sheikh Zubair 'Ali Zai, Authentic according to Sheikh al-Albani -, Abu Dawud: 4607 – authentic chain according to Sheikh Zubair-, Musnad Ahmad: 17144 and 17145, Sunan al-Darimi:96.

²⁹ Jami' at-Tirmidhi: 2165 – he and Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi said Hasan Sahih. It is Authentic according to Sheikh Zubair and Sheikh al-Albani.

³⁰ Al-Bukhari: 2652, Muslim: 2533

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) attested their excellence over us, this is also an indication of them being very much knowledgeable in religion than us. So following the *Salaf* is to imitate them in the beliefs, actions etc. We can never learn Islam better than them but we can understand Islam the way they understood, and it is not possible to claim we are truly following the teachings of Islam until we compare ourselves to the best of generations. If you see your beliefs corresponding to the beliefs of *Salaf*, know that you are on Haqq (truth).

We have so many sects like *Khawarij*, *Rawafidh*, *Murji'ah*, *Mu'tazilah*, *Jahmiyyah* and so on. You will never find them saying "we do not follow Qur'an and *hadith*", did you ever hear them saying this? Of course no, they do have evidences from Qur'an and *ahadith* but they have rejected to follow the teachings of *salaf*. They went astray because they didn't understand Qur'an and *ahadith* as the *salaf* did.

Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "...My nation will split into seventy-three sects, one of which will be in Paradise and seventy-two in Hell." It was said: "O Messenger of Allah, who are they?" He said: "*Al-Jama'ah*."³¹

Ibn 'Abbas narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Allah's Hand is with the *al-Jama'ah*."³²

³¹ Ibn Majah: 3992 – either sound or authentic according to Sheikh Zubair. Sheikh al-Albani said Authentic. Hafidh ibn kathir said there is no problem in its chain

³² Jami' at-Tirmidhi 2166 – and said Hasan Gharib. Authentic according to Sheikh Zubair, Sheikh al-Albani and Sheikh Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i

Narrated ibn 'Abbas that Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Allah will never unite my *ummah* on misguidance, and Allah's hand is over the *al-Jama'ah*."³³

By *al-Jama'ah*, it means path of the believers, it is also known as *Ahlus sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, *Ahlul hadith*, *Ashaab ul-hadith* and *Ahlul Athar*.

Imam al-Bukhari said, "and what the Prophet (may peace be upon him) commanded about adhering to *al-Jama'ah* and they are people of knowledge"³⁴

Imam al-Tirmidhi said, "And the meaning of *al-Jama'ah* among the people of knowledge is *Ahlul Fiqh*, *Ahlul 'Ilm* and *Ahlul Hadith*"³⁵

Narrated Muawiya: I heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying, "A group of people amongst my followers will remain obedient to Allah's orders and they will not be harmed by anyone who will not help them or who will oppose them, till Allah's Order (the Last Day) comes upon them while they are still on the right path."³⁶

It has been narrated on the authority of Thauban that The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said : "A group of people from my Umma will always remain triumphant on the right path and continue to be triumphant (against their opponents). He who deserts them shall not be

³³ Al-Mustadrak of Al-Hakim 399 (authentic according to Sheikh Zubair)
قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «لَا يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ أُمَّتِي عَلَى ضَلَالَةٍ أَبَدًا وَيَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْجَمَاعَةِ»

³⁴ Before al-Bukhari 7349, his words are:

وما أمر النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم بلزوم الجماعة ، وهم أهل العلم

³⁵ Al-Tirmidhi under 2165, his words are:

وَتَفْسِيرُ الْجَمَاعَةِ عِنْدَ أَهْلِ الْعِلْمِ هُمْ أَهْلُ الْفَقْهِ وَالْعِلْمِ وَالْخَبَرِ

³⁶ Sahih al-Bukhari 3641

able to do them any harm. They will remain in this position until Allah's Command is executed (i.e. Qiyamah is established)..”³⁷

Narrated Jabir b. ‘Abdullah who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: A group of people from my Umma will continue to fight In defense of truth and remain triumphant until the Day of judgment.³⁸

Imam al-Bukhari said regarding this group, “meaning (they are) *Ahlul-Hadith*”³⁹

Another narration from him with following words, Jabir b. ‘Abdullah reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say, A section of my people will not cease fighting for the Truth and will prevail till the Day of Resurrection. He said: Jesus son of Mary would then descend and their (Muslim’s) commander would invite him to come and lead them in prayer, but he would say: No, some amongst you are commanders over some (amongst you). This is the honor from Allah for this *Ummah*.⁴⁰

It has been narrated on the authority of Umair b. Umm Hani who said: I heard Mu’awiya say (while delivering a sermon from the pulpit) that he heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: A group of people from my Umma will continue to obey Allah’s Command, and those who desert or oppose them shall not be able to do them any

³⁷ Sahih Muslim: 1920

³⁸ Muslim 1923

³⁹ قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْبُخَارِيُّ يَعْني أَهْلَ الْحَدِيثِ

Ihtijaj bi-Al-Shafi’i page 35 - its chain is authentic according to Sheikh Zubair ‘Ali Zai

⁴⁰ Muslim 156

harm. They will be dominating the people until Allah's Command is executed (i. e. Resurrection is established).⁴¹

Abu Hurairah narrated that: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said : "A group of my *Ummah* will continue to adhere steadfastly to the command of Allah and those who oppose them will not be able to harm them."⁴²

Narrated Imran ibn Husayn: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: A section of my community will continue to fight for the right and overcome their opponents till the last of them fights with the Antichrist.⁴³

Thawban narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said : "I only fear for my *Ummah* from the misguiding A'immah." He said that the Messenger of Allah said : "There will never cease to be a group from my *Ummah* manifest upon the truth, they will not be harmed by those who forsake them until Allah's Decree comes."

'Ali bin Madini said, "They are *Ahlul hadith*."⁴⁴

Mu'awiyah bin Qurrah narrated from his father that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said : "When the inhabitants of Ash-Sham become corrupt, then there is no good in it for you. There will never cease to be a group in my *Ummah* who will be helped(by Allah), they will not be harmed by those who forsake them until the Hour is established." Muhammad bin Isma'il said:

⁴¹ Muslim 1037c

⁴² Ibn Majah 7 – its chain is sound according to Sheikh al-Albani and Sheikh Zubair

⁴³ Abu Dawud 2484 – authentic according To Sheikh al-Albani, Shu'aib al-Arnaut and Sheikh Zubair – Hafidh ibn Hajar said Hasan

⁴⁴ At-Tirmidhi 2229 – he said Hasan Sahih

“Ali bin Al-Madini said: ‘They are the people of *Hadith*.’”⁴⁵

Ahlul hadith or *Ahlus sunnah* or *Ashaab ul-hadith* are known by their friends and foes for following Qur’an and *sunnah*. Best example ever produced, there exist no *ayah* in the Qur’an which goes against them, there exist no *hadith* in collection of treasury of *ahadith* which goes against them. All praises is due to Allah. They are well known for their opposition for *bid’ah*, either it be *bid’ah* of *Haruriyyah* (*Khawarij*), *Rafidah*, *Murji’ah*, *Qadariyyah*, *Jabriyyah*, *Mujassimah*, *Mu’tazilah*, *Jahmiyyah* etc. They have refuted all the deviant sects and they were never harmed by them. Whoever is interested in knowing what *Salaf* said regarding saved group can read book of Sheikh Zubair ‘Ali Zai “*Ahlul hadith* an attributive name” in English or اهل حديث ایک صفاتی نام in Urdu.

⁴⁵ Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2192 – and said Hasan Sahih - its chain is authentic according to al-Albani, Shu’aib al-Arnaut and Sheikh Zubair
قَالَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْمَدِينِيِّ هُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْحَدِيثِ

What does the Athaar say?

Now that you have known Qur'an and *Sahih ahadith* has enjoined us to follow believers specially the first three generations. Now let's see what does the Athaar has the say:

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood [D. 32H] (may Allah be pleased with him) said,

لا يزال الناس بخير ما أتاهم العلم من قبل أكابرهم، فإذا أتاهم العلم من أصاغرهم هلكوا.⁴⁶

People will stay on goodness as long as knowledge comes to them from their seniors, when knowledge comes to them from their juniors , they perish.

Abu Mas'ood 'Uqba bin 'Amr al-Ansari al-Badri [D. 40H] (may Allah be pleased with him) said to someone,

أوصيك بتقوى الله و لزوم الجماعة فإن الله عز وجل لم يكن ليجمع أمة محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم على ضلالة.⁴⁷

I enjoin you to have *Taqwa* (devoutness and fear) of Allah and adhere to *al-Jama'ah*, indeed Allah (may he be Exalted and glorified) will never gather the *Ummah* of Muhammad (peace be upon him) upon misguidance.

'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas [D. 68H] (may Allah be pleased with him) said to *Khawarij* in a debate,

⁴⁶ Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm by ibn Abdul Bar 1058, its chain is authentic according to Abu Alashbal Hassan Alzuhairei , also see Tarikh ibn Abi Khaythama 616, al-Mu'jim al-Kabir of Tabarani 8503

⁴⁷ Narrated by al-Imam Ya'qub bin Salman al-Farsi in Al-Ma'rafah wa al-Tarikh, volume 3, page 244-245, It's chain is sound according to Sheikh Zubair 'Ali Zai

أتيتكم من عند صحابة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم من المهاجرين و الأنصار من عند ابن عم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم و صهره، و عليهم نزل القرآن فهم أعلم بتأويله منكم، و ليس فيكم منهم أحد.⁴⁸

I came to you from the Companions of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) among the *Muhājireen* and the *Ansar*, from the cousin of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and his son-in-law, and upon them descended the Qur'an (meaning in their presence), and they are more knowledgeable about its interpretation than you, and none of them is among you.

Also from him, he said,

عليكم بالاستقامة، واتباع الأمراء والأثر، و اياكم والبندع.⁴⁹

Upon you is to be upright, follow the rulers and tradition (*Athar, hadith*), and beware of the innovation.

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar [D. 74H] (may Allah be pleased with him) said,

من كان مستنئاً فليستن بمن قد مات؛ أولئك أصحاب محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم -كانوا خير هذه الأمة أبزها قلوباً، وأعمقها علماً، وأقلها تكلفاً، قوم اختارهم الله لصحبة نبيه صلى الله عليه وسلم.⁵⁰

Whoever wants to follow then he should follow who has died; those are the companions of Muhammad, may Allah's blessing and peace be upon him – they were the best of this *Ummah*, the purest in hearts, the most knowledgeable, and the least presumptuous, a people whom Allah chose to accompany his Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Abu al-‘Aliya [D. 93H] (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

⁴⁸ Abdul Razzaq narrated it in his Musanaff 18628, al-Nasai in al-Kubra 8575, and Al-Hakim in Mustadrak 2656 and he authenticated it and al-Dhahabi agreed with him

⁴⁹ Al-sunnah of al-Marwazi page 94, narration number 84. It is Hasan according to the Muhaqqiq

⁵⁰ Hilyah al-awliya 1/305 with sound chain and similar quote from Al-Hasan al-basri in Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm 1807

تعلموا الإسلام، فإذا تعلمتموه فلا ترغبوا عنه، وعليكم بالصرط المستقيم فإنه الإسلام، ولا تحرفوا الصراط يميناً ولا شمالاً، وعليكم بسنة نبيكم صلى الله عليه وسلم والذي عليها أصحابه.⁵¹

Learn Islam, and if you learn it, do not deviate from it, and adhere to the straight path, for it is Islam, and do not deviate from the path to the right or to the left and adhere to the *Sunnah* of your Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and that which is followed by his companions.

‘Umar bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz [D. 101H] (may Allah have mercy on him) refuted people who deny divine decree by saying,

لَقَدْ قَرَأُوا مِنْهُ مَا قَرَأْتُمْ، وَعَلِمُوا مِنْ تَأْوِيلِهِ مَا جَهِلْتُمْ، وَقَالُوا بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ كُلِّهِ: بَكْتَابٍ وَقَدَرٍ.⁵²

They (*salaf*) also read in it (the Qur’an) what you read, and they knew its interpretation of which you are ignorant. After that they said: All this is by writing and decreeing.

Sulaiman al-A’mash [D. 148H] (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

كان هذا العلم عند أقوام كان أحدهم لأن يخر من السماء أحب إليه من أن يزيد فيه واوا أو ألفا أو دالا.

53

This knowledge was held by such people that falling from the sky would be dearer to one of them than to add to it a *waw*, *alif* or *daal*.

Imam al-Awza’ee [D. 157H] (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

عليك بآثار من سلف، وإن رفضك الناس، وإياك! وأراء الرجال، وإن زخرفوا لك بالقول.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Al-Shari’ah of al-Ajurri 19, its chain is Hasan according to Sheikh Ghulam Mustafa

⁵² Abu Dawud 4612 and al-shari’a of al-Ajurri 223 and its chain is sound according to Sheikh Ghulam Mustafa Zaheer and Sheikh al-Albani said Sahih Maqtu’

⁵³ Al-Kifayah of Khatib al-Baghdadi volume 1 page 177 with Sound chain

⁵⁴ Al-Shari’a of al-Ajurri page 59 with authentic chain According to Sheikh Zubair

Adhere to the narrations of the *Salaf* even if the people were to abandon you. And be aware of the opinions of people no matter how much they beautify it with speech.

Qadi Sharik bin ‘Abdullah [D. 177H] (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

أما نحن فقد أخذنا ديننا هذا عن التابعين عن أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، فهم ممن أخذوا.

55

As for us, we took our religion from the *taba’in*, they took from the companions of Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and from where did they take it? (everyone knows)

Iman Malik bin Anas [D. 179H] (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

إن حقاً على من طالب العلم أن يكون له وقار و سكينة و خشية، و أن يكون متبعاً لأثر من مضى قبله.

56

It is incumbent upon the one who seeks knowledge to have dignity, calmness and fear, and to follow the *Athar* (tradition) of those who came before him.

Sufyan bin Uyaina [D. 198H] (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

إذا كان يأتى بمن قبله فهو إمام لمن بعده. 57

If one follows those before him, then he is an *Imam* for those after him.

Ibn al-Anbari [D. 328H] (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

⁵⁵ Kitab al-Asma wa al-Sifaat of al-Bayhaqi 959, its chain is authentic according to Sheikh Ghulam Mustafa

⁵⁶ Al-Jami’ li-Akhlaq al-Rawi page 212, it’s chain is sound according to Mahmud al-tahaan

⁵⁷ Al-faqih wal-mutafaqqih of al-khatib al-baghdadi volume 1 page 436, its chain is authentic according to Sheikh Ghulam Mustafa

من قال في القرآن قولاً يوافق هواه , لم يأخذه عن أئمة السلف , فأصاب فقد أخطأ , لحكمه على القرآن بما لا يعرف أصله , ولا يقف على مذاهب أهل الأثر والنقل فيه.⁵⁸

Whoever says something about the Qur'an that coincides with his innovation, which he did not take it from the *Imams* of the predecessors, and even it was correct, then he has erred, because he judged the Qur'an by something whose evidence is unknown, and he does not know the *Madhab* of *Ahlul Athar wal Naql* in it.

Imam Ibn Taymiyyah [D. 728H] (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

قال العلماء : من لم يكن متبعاً سبيلهم كان متبعاً غير سبيلهم فاستدلوا بذلك على أن اتباع سبيلهم واجب فليس لأحد أن يخرج عما أجمعوا عليه.⁵⁹

Scholars say: He who does not follow the path of them (believers), (and) follows a path other than the believers. From this, the scholars concluded that it is obligatory to follow their path, so it is not permissible for anyone to deviate from what they agreed upon.

Ibn Rajab [795H] (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

وفي زماننا يتعين كتابة كلام أئمة السلف المقتدى بهم إلى زمن الشافعي وأحمد وإسحاق وأبي عبيد: وليكن الإنسان على حذر مما حدث بعدهم فإنه حدث بعدهم حوادث كثيرة.⁶⁰

In our time it is necessary to write the statements of the *A'immah* of the *salaf* to the time of Al-Shafi'i, Ahmad, Ishaq and Abu Ubaid: so that the person be wary of what happened after them, for many incidents happened after them. (he is referring to the trials and innovations that happened after *Salaf*)

END of Juz, all praises belong to Allah!

⁵⁸ Al-faqih wal-mutafaqqih volume 1 page 223 with authentic chain according to Sheikh Ghulam Mustafa

⁵⁹ Majmu' al Fatawa volume 7 page 173

⁶⁰ Bayan fadhl 'Ilm al-salaf page 26