

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Friday Khutbah

Tawheed, its significance and some issues relating to it

The honour of any knowledge stems from the honour of the subject of that knowledge. Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) is the most honourable Being, and there isn't any knowledge that is more honourable and exalted than a knowledge that is related to Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) and His attributes.

The significance of this knowledge lies in the fact that it is the means to realise the purpose for which man is created – which is to worship Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*.) Worship of Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) cannot be proper or complete without proper knowledge of Allah. The greater the knowledge of a person, the greater is his/her worship of Him (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*)

Knowledge of Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) and His attributes is a requisite of *Tawheed*. *Tawheed* is the foundation of the *Deen* and core of the message of all the messengers of Allah. Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) says in the Qur'an: "We did not send any messenger before you but We revealed to him: There is no god but I, so worship Me."

In the *Hadith*, Rasulullah ﷺ said: "Islam is built on five pillars; the *Shahadah* of la ilaha illah Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishment of *Salat*, payment of *Zakat*, the fasting of Ramadan and Hajj to the House"

Tawheed - as represented in the *Shahadah*- is the first and greatest pillar of Islam and the rest of the pillars; the prayer, *Zakat*, fasting and hajj are branches. They are means to realise *Tawheed*. Despite this fact we find that the majority of Muslims do not have concern for *Tawheed* as they would have concern for the rest of the pillars of Islam. As an example, you would find them asking about the details of *Salat*, *Zakat*, fasting and Hajj but not so much about *Tawheed*. This is something which is very strange indeed. This is the case despite the fact that *Shirk*, which is the opposite of *Tawheed*, is more subtle than the creeping of a black ant on a black rock in a dark night – as related in the tradition, and that the strong ones are not safe from it (*Shirk*), let alone the weak.

The definition of *Tawheed* is to hold Allah as unique and matchless in the qualities that are due to Him alone.

According to the scholars, there are three categories of *Tawheed*. These are: *Tawheed ar-Ruboobiyyah* (Lordship), *Tawheed al-Uloohiyyah* (Worship) and *Tawheed al-Asma` was-Sifaat* (Names and Attributes of Allah)

As for *Tawheed ar-Ruboobiyyah* it is to believe that Allah is the creator of everything, owner and disposer of affairs and that there is no partners besides Him in that.

As for *Tawheed al-Uloohiyyah* it is to believe that Allah is the only one worthy of worship. One must not worship anything besides Him- in the broad sense of the word worship. None of the acts of worship should be directed to anyone other than Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) – whether he is a close angel, a sent prophet, a righteous *Wali* or any other creation.

It was with regard to this type of *Tawheed* that the Arab *Mushriks* went astray. For it is well known that the *Kuffar* whom the Prophet ﷺ fought against used to acknowledge the lordship of Allah i.e. He (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) is the creator and provider. Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) says in the Qur'an: "And if you ask them, "Who has created the heavens and the earth?" They will surely say: "The All-Mighty, the All-Knowing created them."

And He says: "And if you ask them as to who has created them, they will certainly say, "Allah".

As for the third type; *Tawheed al-Asma` was-Sifaat*- or the names and attributes of Allah: it is to affirm all the names and attributes which He has ascribed for himself in His book or are attributed to Him by His Messenger ﷺ in a *Hadith*.

One must affirm these names and attributes in a way that is befitting to Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) without interpreting them in a way that changes or denies them, without making a resemblance between the qualities of Allah and the qualities of His creation and without making a descriptive designation of these qualities.

It was with regard to this type of *Tawheed* that some sections of this *Ummah* had gone astray by changing and denying some of the attributes of Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*.) contradicting the way of *as-Salaf as-Salih*, may Allah be pleased with them.

One example of how some had gone astray with regard to the attributes of Allah is the interpretation of the hands of Allah mentioned in the Qur'anic verse: "The Jews said: "Allah's Hand is tied up (i.e. He does not give and spend.) Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched. He spends (of His Bounty) as He wills."

Allah affirmed for Himself two hands which are described as being outstretched with generosity. So, we must believe that Allah has two hands which are outspread with bounties. We must not try to make a descriptive designation of these hands, we must not make a likening of them with the hands of His creation because Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*.) says: "There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer." - Ash-Shura (42):11. We must not deny them by interpreting the words (His hands) to mean something else - as some said the hand (of Allah) means generosity.

Another example of an attribute of Allah with regard to it some had gone astray is the interpretation of the rising of Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) over the Throne. Allah affirmed that He arose over the Throne in seven verses in the Qur'an. It is a rising which is befitting to

Him. It is not like the sitting of a human being on a bed or like a human being mounting on the back of an animal. Whoever said that the meaning of *Istawa* – or arose over – is occupied or overtook had made a serious mistake because he had changed the words of Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) and contradicted the consensus of the *Sahaba* and those who followed them.

Imam Malik, may Allah have mercy upon him, was asked about *Istawa*– or arose over- in His words (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*): “Al-Rahman arose over the Throne.” He answered: *Istawa* is well known (because it is mentioned in the Qur’an); however, the manner (of *Istawa*) is unknown. To believe in it (*Istawa*) is *Wajib* and to ask about the manner is *Bid'aa*

In summary: what a Muslim is obligated to believe in with regard to the names and attributes of Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) is that:

- i) Affirming the names and attributes of Allah mentioned in the Qur’an and *Sunnah*).
- ii) Firm belief that to Allah belong all the qualities of perfection and that He is free from all defects and shortcomings. One must also believe that Allah is unique and His qualities do not resemble the qualities of the created things in any way as He says: "There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer." He also says: And there is none co-equal unto Him.”
- iii) One must not hope to grasp with his limited intellect the description or manner of these attributes. If someone asks: How does Allah hear, how does He see, how did He arise over the throne, how does He descend, How does He laugh, how is His hand and similar questions; we answer by saying: If we cannot realise the reality of His being with our intellect how can we then know His qualities and attributes. He (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) says in the Qur’an: “He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them, and they do not encompass Him in (their) knowledge.”

There is a final issue which I wanted to talk about in order to complete this subject; it is the answer of the question of: Where is Allah?

This is a subject with regard to it many sections of his *Ummah* had gone astray. One brother has asked me to explain this issue after he has noticed that many good practising Muslims make a serious mistake with regard to this issue by saying that Allah is everywhere!

This issue needs some detailed clarification which I will leave to another time because of the shortage of time today. For today, I suffice myself by saying that: The opinion of *as-Salaf as-Salih* (the right acting predecessors) may Allah be pleased with them- with regard to this issue is that Allah is above all His creation. The Qur’an and *Sunnah* have explicitly pointed out to this fact. I will mention the proof from the Qur’an and *Sunnah* as well as the rational and instinctive proofs in the next *khutbah insha’ Allah*.