

الْقُرْآنُ الْكَرِيمُ

THE NOBLE QUR'ĀN

With Tafsīr Upon the Way of the Righteous Salaf

Detailed Knowledge of the Path of
the Criminals. Ibn al-Qayyim's
Commentary on:



Al-An'ām (6:55)

وَلَسْتَينَ سَبِيلُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

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Introduction

All praise is due to Allāh, Lord of the Worlds, and may Allāh make good mention of His Prophet, his family and his companions and grant them peace and safety. To proceed:

The commentary of Ibn al-Qayyim (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) upon the verse in Sūrah al-An‘ām—[in which Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) explains that the path which opposes the path of truth, the path of the criminals, has been made sufficiently clear, in detail, for those who believe]—contains insights, lessons, reminders and benefits for those engaged in da‘wah. In particular for those who do not implement the methodology of the Prophets and of the Righteous Salaf in da‘wah to Allāh and in rectification of the servant and the land.

We present here a translation of this most excellent passage from the book “al-Fawā’id”¹

Abu ‘Iyāḍ

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v1.01

¹ Dār ‘Ālam al-Fawā’id, pp. 157-162.



وَكَذَلِكَ نَفْصَلُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِتَسْتَبِينَ سَبِيلُ
 الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

“And thus do We explain the signs (to you O Muḥammad) in detail, and so that the way of the criminals may become evident (to you).” (Al-An‘ām 6:55).

Ibn al-Qayyim (رحمته الله) stated:

Allāh the Exalted said: “And thus do We explain the signs (to you O Muḥammad) in detail, and so that the way of the criminals may become evident (to you).” (6:55). And He said: “And whoever contends with the Messenger after the guidance has become plainly evident to him, and follows a path other than that of the Believers (the Companions), We shall leave him in the path he has chosen...” (4:115).

And Allāh, the Exalted, has explained in His Book the path of the Believers in detail and the path of the criminals in detail. [He explained] the end-result of these and the

end-result of those, the actions of these and the actions of those, the allies of these and the allies of those, His granting success to these and His desertion of those, the means through which He granted success to these and the means through which He deserted those. And He, the Sublime, made the two affairs apparent in His Book, He uncovered them, clarified them and explained them with the utmost of explanations until the visions (of the hearts) witness them like the eyes witness light and darkness.

So those who have knowledge of Allāh, His Book and His Dīn, know:

—the path of the **Believers** with *detailed knowledge* and

—the path of the **Criminals** with *detailed knowledge*.

Thereby, the two paths have become evidently clear to them just like the path which leads a person to his goal and the path that leads him to his destruction become clear to him. So these ones [who have detailed knowledge in both areas] are the most knowledgeable of the creation of the truth, the greatest in benefit to them, and most sincere in advice to them, and they are pointers, guides (for the creation).

Through this (detailed knowledge in both areas), the Companions became prominent, excelling over everyone who came after them, until the Day of Judgement. For

they were raised in the path of misguidance, disbelief, polytheism, and the paths that lead to destruction, and they knew them in detail. Then the Messenger came to them, and removed them from those darkneses to the paths of guidance and to the straight path of Allāh. So they came out of the severe darkness to the complete light (of guidance), from Shirk to Tawhid, from ignorance to knowledge, from misguidance to guidance, from injustice to justice, from confusion and blindness to guidance and insight. So they knew the worth of what they had acquired (of detailed knowledge and guidance) and were successful (victorious) with it and they knew the (reality) of what they used to be upon. For the goodness of an opposite is made clear by its opposite, and the realities of things are made clear by their opposites. So they increased in their desire and love for what they had moved towards (of guidance), and aversion and hatred of what they moved away from. And they were the most loving of people for Tawhīd, Īmān and Islām, and the most hating of people for its opposite, knowing the path in detail.

As for those who came after the Companions, amongst them were those who were raised in Islām, without knowing its opposite in detail. So some of the details of the path of the Believers became confused with the path of

the criminals to him. Confusion occurs when knowledge of the two paths becomes weak, or one of them, just as ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb said: “The handholds of Islām will become undone one by one when a people are raised in Islām not knowing Jāhiliyyah.” And this is from the perfection of knowledge of ‘Umar (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ), because when a person does not know Jāhiliyyah and its ruling—and this is everyone who opposes what the Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) came with—then this is from Jāhiliyyah and he is ascribed to ignorance. And everything that opposes the Messenger, then it is from ignorance. So whoever does not know the path of the criminals, it will not be clear to him, or if he doubts and presumes that some (part) of the path (that he is in) is from the path of the Believers, as occurred to some of this ummah in many affairs pertaining to creed, knowledge and action, which were in reality from the path of the Criminals and disbelievers, enemies of the Messengers. Such a one who does not know that [these affairs] are from the path (of the Criminals) will enter them into the path of the Believers, and will call to them, and will declare whoever opposes them a disbeliever, and will make lawful (with respect to them) what Allāh and His Messenger made unlawful, as occurred from most of the people of innovation from the Jahmiyyah, Qadariyyah, Khawārij,

Rawāfiḍ and their likes, from those who innovated and called to (their innovation) and declared as disbelievers those who opposed it.²

And the people in this subject are of four groups

The first: He to whom the path of the Believers and the path of the Criminals has become clear in detail, in knowledge and practice, they are the most knowledgeable of creation.³

The second group: He who is blind to both paths, from those who resemble the animals, they are unique in the path of the criminals and greater followers of it.

The third group: He who turned his concern to knowing the path of the Believers (in detail) as opposed to its opposite (which is the path of the Criminals). He knows its opposite in only general terms and (knows only) that it is opposition (to the truth). And that everything that opposes

² And similarly, those who are upon innovation and misguidance (because of deficiencies in their knowledge of the path of the Believers in detail and the path of the Criminals in detail), they will declare the people upon the way of the Salaf to be innovators, misguided, when the reality is the other way around. And this is because the sects of innovation and deviation have followed the path of those nations who came before, from the Jews, Christians and their likes, in the way that they distorted and altered their religion.

³ They are the followers of the Salaf in every age and era, and their statements, and positions are based on truth, justice and wisdom in accordance with the Sunnah and the methodology of the Salaf.

the path of the Believers is futile, even if he has not conceived (and understood) it in detail. Rather, when he hears something that opposes the path of the Believers he turns his hearing away from it, and does not occupy himself in understanding it and knowing the angle of its futility. He is in the same position as the one whose soul is safe and free from desiring deeds of lust, they do not pass through his heart and his soul does not invite him to them, as opposed to the first group (mentioned above). For they know these desires, their souls incline towards them, and they strive against their (souls) to abandon (these desires) for the sake of Allāh.

And they had written to ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb asking him about this issue: Which of the two is superior? A man who did not think about desires and they did not pass through his heart, or a man whose soul contended with the desires and he abandoned them for the sake of Allāh? So ‘Umar wrote back: “The one whose soul desires sins and he abandons them for the sake of Allāh is from ‘...the ones whose hearts Allāh has tested for piety. For them is forgiveness and a great reward.’” (49:3).

Such is the one who knew innovations, shirk and falsehood and its paths (in detail) and hated them for the sake of Allāh. [The one] who took caution against them,

warned from them and repelled them from himself. He did not leave them to damage the face of his īmān and nor [allow them] to make him inherit misconception and doubt. Rather, through his knowledge of them, he increases in his insight regarding the truth and his love for it, and his hatred of those things (innovations, shirk and all falsehood). [So such a one] is superior to the one for whom these affairs have not occurred in his mind or passed through his heart. For everytime they pass through his heart and appear to him, he will increase in his love for the truth, his knowledge of its status and his happiness with it. As a result, his īmān will increase. Similar to how a person who thinks of desires and sins, everytime they pass by him and he turns away from them to their opposite, his love for their opposite will increase, as will his aspiration, pursuit and zeal for it. So Allāh, the Sublime, did not test his believing servant with the love of desires and sins and his soul's inclination towards them except in order to lead him, by way of them, to love of what is better than them, and what is better for him, and more beneficial and lasting than them. And also in order that he may strive against his soul in abandoning them for His, the Sublime's sake, so that this striving leads him to arrive at the greatest beloved (of all, which is Allāh)...

The fourth group: A group that knows the paths of evil, innovation and disbelief in detail and the path of the believers in general (only).

And this is the way of many of those who concerned themselves with the statements (of doctrine) of the various nations and of the statements of the people of innovation.⁴ Thus, he knew them in detail but did not know what the Messenger came with in a like manner. Rather, his knowledge was only a generalised knowledge, even if in some affairs, this knowledge might have been detailed and clear. Whoever reflects upon their books will see this clearly. Likewise the one who knew the paths of evil, oppression and corruption in detail, having traversed them, when he repents and turns back from them to the path of the righteous, his knowledge (of this path) will only be general. He will not be knowledgeable of it in detail, with the same level of knowledge as the one who has spent his whole life in traversing it.⁵

⁴ Referring here to the likes of al-Ash'arī (d. 324H), Abū Manşūr al-Baghdādī (d. 429H) and al-Shahrastānī (d. 548H) and their likes. They were people of kalām, and did not have detailed knowledge of the Sunnah and of the madhhab of the Salaf.

⁵ There are many who repent from the paths of innovation and deviation, however, despite their lack of knowledge of the truth in detail, proceed to enter into the arena of da'wah and thereby fall into mistakes.

And the intent is that Allāh the Sublime loves that the path of His enemies is known so that it can be avoided and hated just as He loves that the path of His allies is known so that it can be loved and traversed.

And in this knowledge (of this matter) are benefits and secrets that none knows but Allāh, of the knowledge of the generality of His, the Sublime's rubūbiyyah (lordship), His wisdom and the perfection of His Names and Attributes. And how they are connected to the affairs that take place (in the creation), and how they entail the effects that arise from them and the affairs necessitated (by them). And that is from that greatest of evidences for His lordship, His dominion, His ulūhiyyah, His (attributes) of love and hate, and His reward and His punishment.

And Allāh knows best.

Notes:

This tremendous statement from the great scholar, Ibn al-Qayyim (رحمته الله), contains many benefits and lessons:

1. That those who have detailed knowledge of Tawhīd, Īmān, Sunnah and the Way of the Salaf alongside detailed knowledge of Shirk, Kufr, Bid'ah and the Way of the Innovators and Deviants, they are upon baṣīrah (insight), and their way is loved by Allāh (عز وجل), because within it is

preservation of His Dīn and its protection from alteration (tabdīl), and distortion (taḥrīf).

2. Those who have a detailed knowledge of falsehood and only a general knowledge of the truth, then they will err and incline towards refuting falsehood with falsehood, due to their inability to recognise falsehood and how it clashes with the truth. This was the case of Ahl al-Kalām from the Jahmiyyah, Mu‘tazilah, Kullābiyyah, Ash‘ariyyah, Māturidiyyah and others in the field of the Attributes in particular, and in other affairs. The same applies in every field of knowledge.

3. Those who have a detailed knowledge of the path of truth but only a generalised knowledge of the paths of falsehood, then they will be at risk of accommodating and accepting aspects of falsehood which they have been unable to recognise due their deficient generalised knowledge of it. And to the extent of their deficiency in this knowledge of falsehood, they will have weakness in their knowledge of the path of truth as well, because only by their opposites are the realities of things known.

4. Those who have only a generalised knowledge of the paths of both truth and falsehood, they are the ones who are misled in every direction by anyone who comes along

and presents himself as a scholar or a caller, and they are always closer to proceeding upon the path of the criminals.

5. One can apply the above insights to what takes place in the field of da‘wah to Allāh and comparing between those who follow the Companions and the Salaf and those besides them. For the speech of those upon the way of the Salaf will be clear, concise, the evidences will be simple and powerful and straight to the point. And as for those besides them they will be full of philosophy, rhetoric, opinion and in their discussions, it will not become evident what is the truth and what is falsehood, and nor will such discussions create—in those being addressed—the desire, aspiration and zeal to follow the truth.

6. Many of those who lack detailed knowledge of the path of truth and the paths of innovation, falsehood and misguidance accuse those upon the way of the Salaf with innovation, falsehood and misguidance, due to their ignorance and lack of insight into truth and falsehood.

7. In a modern context, there are many who have been raised in an environment in which the many deviations and innovated principles of the Muslim Brotherhood and other groups spread throughout the ummah, affecting the hearts and minds of millions and permeating into their beliefs, statements, ideologies, methodologies, allegiances and so

on. When such people repent and come to the Sunnah or to the way of the Salaf, their lack of knowledge of the Sunnah in detail remains a handicap for them. And on account of it they fall into mistakes, when they engage in da'wah or speak in affairs that they are not yet thoroughly knowledgeable of.

8. It is not possible for a person to be firmly upon the path of the Believers in the 21st century until and unless he knows in detail the path of the criminals among the innovated groups which appeared in the 20th century and misguided the ummah with tremendous misguidance, calling them to spurious, false notions of unity (for ulterior motives and agendas) and to false notions of justice, and to false promises and hopes, the while they remain upon the major innovations and heresies which ruined the ummah.

9. There are many who are from the third⁶ and fourth⁷ groups who are followed in their ambiguities and errors by those in the second group—the ones who lack detailed knowledge of both paths of truth and paths of falsehood, and they mistakenly consider themselves and those whom they follow to be upon truth.

⁶ Those who know the path of truth in detail.

⁷ Those who know the path of falsehood in detail.

10. Also, there are scholars who may not know the falsehood in detail in relation to others, either in a general sense, or in certain subject areas or in specific issues. This helps to explain what arises sometimes of differences between scholars in their rulings and positions towards groups, parties, sects and individuals. Thus, what counts is the one who provides the evidence. It is from the way of the people of desires, to always cite “difference of opinion” in such matters as an excuse to avoid clinging to the truth and its necessities and requirements, after it has already been made clear with sufficient evidence.

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