
Using the word Salafee

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Question: Why use the name Salafee? Is it a call towards a party or a group or a madh-hab (school of thought)? Or is it a new sect in Islaam?

Answer: Shaykh al-Albaanee (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ)¹: Indeed, the word Salaf is well known in the Arabic language as well as in the religious terminology. But what concerns us here, is its discussion from the religious standpoint. Thus, it has authentically been reported on the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)² that during the sickness from which he died from, he said to Faatimah (رضى الله عنها)³: "...So fear Allaah and have patience. And I am the best Salaf (predecessor) for you."⁴

Furthermore, the scholars have used this word "Salaf" many times, such that it would be too Aboundant to number and take into account. Sufficient for us, is one example, and it was that which they have used in their battle against innovations:

"And every good lies in following he who has preceded (man salaf)
while every evil lies in the innovating of he who came after (man khalaf)."

However, there are from those who claim to have knowledge, some people who reject this ascription, claiming that there is no basis for it! And so they say: "It is not permissible for a Muslim to say: 'I am Salafee.'" So it is as if he is saying that it is not permissible for a Muslim to say: "I am following the Salaf as-Saalih (the Pious Predecessors) in what they were upon from beliefs, worship and methodology"! There is no doubt that such a rejection – if that is what he intended – necessitates that one free himself from the correct Islaam, which the righteous predecessors were upon, at the head of whom was the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). This is as is indicated in the mutawaatir hadeeth found in the two Saheehs and other than them, that he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: "**The best of mankind is my generation, then those that come after them, then those that come after them.**" So it is not permissible for a Muslim to absolve himself from this ascription to the righteous predecessors, whereas, if he were to absolve himself from any other ascription, the scholars would not be able to ascribe him with disbelief or sinfulness.

As for the one who rejects this name from himself, will you not see him ascribing himself to one of the madh-habs?! Regardless of whether this madh-hab is related to 'Aqeedah (Creed) or Fiqh (Jurisprudence)? So he is either Ash'aree or Matureedee. Or perhaps he is from the people of Hadeeth or Hanafee, or Shaafi'ee or Maalikee or Hanbalee or whatever else enters into the title of "Ahl-us-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah." But in spite of this, the one who ascribes himself to the Ash'aree madh-hab or to one of the four madh-habs is in fact ascribing himself to individuals that are not infallible, without a doubt, even if there were scholars among them who were correct (in their verdicts). I wish I knew – why doesn't he reject the likes of these ascriptions to individuals who are not free from error?

¹ (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) (rahimahullaah) May Allaah have mercy on him

² (صلى الله عليه وسلم) May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him

³ (رضى الله عنها) (rad iyallaahu `anhaa) May Allaah be pleased with her

⁴ Saheeh Muslim: no. 2450

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But as for the one who ascribes himself to the Salaf As-Saalih (righteous predecessors), then he indeed ascribes himself to infallibility ('ismah), in the general sense. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) has mentioned that one of the signs of the Saved Sect is that they will cling tightly onto what the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was upon and what his Companions (رضي الله عنهم)⁵ were upon. So whosoever holds tightly onto them, then he is certainly upon the guidance from his Lord.

And furthermore, it is an ascription that brings honour to the one that ascribes himself to it, and one that facilitates for him the way of the Saved Sect. And these matters do not apply to anyone that ascribes himself to any other ascription, since they are not free from one of two things. Either it is an ascription to a specific individual that is not infallible or it is an ascription to a group of people who follow the methodology of this individual who is not infallible. So there is no infallibility (in their ascriptions) either way. On the opposite of this, there is the infallibility of the Companions (رضي الله عنهم) of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (as a whole). And it is that which we have been commanded to hold tightly onto, from his Sunnah and the Sunnah of his Companions (رضي الله عنهم) after him.

And we must persist and strongly emphasise that our understanding of Allaah's Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) must be in accordance with the methodology of his (صلى الله عليه وسلم) Companions (رضي الله عنهم). This is so that we can be upon infallibility, as opposed to inclining away towards the right or the left, or deviating with an understanding that comes solely from ourselves, of which there is not found in the Book of Allaah or the Sunnah of His Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) that which provides evidence for it.

Furthermore, why is it not sufficient for us to ascribe ourselves to (just) the Qur'aan and the Sunnah? The reason goes back to two matters, the first of which is related to the religious texts, and the second of which is due to the existence of numerous Islaamic groups.

With regard to the first reason, then we find in the religious texts, a command to obey something else in connection with the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, as is found in Allaah's saying:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءٰمَنُوْا اطِيعُوْا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيعُوْا الرَّسُوْلَ وَاُوْلٰى الْاَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

O you who believe! Obey Allaah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority⁶

So if there were someone in authority, who was given the oath of allegiance by the Muslims, it would be obligatory to obey him just as it would be obligatory to obey the Qur'aan and the Sunnah. So even if he or those around him commit errors, it would be obligatory to obey him in order to repel the harm of differences of opinions. But this is with the well-known condition: "**There is no obedience to a creation (if it involves) disobeying the Creator.**"⁷ And Allaah, may He be Exalted, says:

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدٰى وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيْلِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلٰى وَنُصَلِّهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَاَسَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا

And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger (Muhammad) after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows other than the believers' way, we shall keep him in the path he has chosen, and burn him in Hell - what an evil destination⁸

Indeed, Allaah, Mighty and Sublime, is free and far removed from all imperfections and defects. And there is no doubt or uncertainty that His mentioning of "**the Way of the Believers**" here, is only due to

⁵ (رضي الله عنهم) (rad iyallahu 'anhum) May Allaah be pleased with them

⁶ Soorah an-Nisaa [04:59]

⁷ Silsilat-ul-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah: no. 179

⁸ Soorah an-Nisaa [04:115]

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an immense and comprehensive wisdom and benefit. So it indicates that there is an important obligation – and it is that our following of the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) must be in accordance with what the first Muslims were upon. And they are the Companions (رضي الله عنهم) of Allaah's Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), then those who came after them, then those who came after them. And this is what the da'wat-us-Salafeeyah (The Salafee Call) invites and calls to. And it is that which is its main priority in the foundation of its call and the methodology of its educating process.

Indeed, the Salafee Call truly unites the ummah, while any other call only causes division to the ummah. Allaah, Mighty and Sublime, says:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ

O you who believe! Be afraid of Allaah, and be with those who are true (in words and deeds)⁹

So anyone that distinguishes between the Book and the Sunnah on one side and the Salaf as-Saalih (Righteous Predecessors) on the other side, then he can never be truthful.

As for with regard to the second reason, then the groups and parties of today do not direct at all towards the following of **"the Way of the Believers"**, which has been mentioned in the ayah. And there are some ahaadeeth, which further confirm and support that ayah, such as the hadeeth of the seventy-three sects. All of them will be in the Hellfire except one. The Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) described them as: **"The one which is upon the same thing that I and my companions are upon today."**¹⁰

This hadeeth resembles that ayah which mentions the **"Way of the Believers"**. Also, there is the hadeeth of Al-'Irbaad Ibn Saariyah, (رضي الله عنه)¹¹ in which he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: **"So stick to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly-guided Khaleefahs after me."**¹² So therefore, there are two Sunnahs: The Sunnah of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and the Sunnah of the righteous Khaleefahs.

So there is no doubt that we – who come in a later time – must return back to the Qur'aan, the Sunnah and "the Way of the Believers." And it is not permissible for us to say: "We can understand the Qur'aan and the Sunnah by themselves, without turning towards what the righteous predecessors were upon." And there must be an ascription in this time that distinguishes and is detailed. So it is not sufficient for us to say, "I am a Muslim" only! Or "My madh-hab is Islaam"! For every sect says that! – the Raafidee, the Ibaadee, the Qadyanee, as well as other sectarians!! So what is it that distinguishes you from them?

And if you were to say, "I am a Muslim who is upon the Qur'aan and the Sunnah", this would also not be sufficient. This is because, the members of these sects – of the Ash'arees and the Maturedees and the Hizbees – they all claim to follow these two sources also. So there is no doubt that the clear, plain, distinctive and decisive classification is to say, "I am a Muslim who is upon the Qur'aan and the Sunnah and upon the methodology of the Salaf As-Saalih (Pious Predecessors). And that can be said in short by saying, "I am a Salafee." So based on this, indeed the truth which is unavoidable, is that it is not enough to rely on the Qur'aan and the Sunnah without the methodology of the Salaf, for it explains these two with regard to understanding and concept, knowledge and action, and da'wah (calling) and Jihaad.

⁹ Soorah at-Taubah [09:119]

¹⁰ Silsilat-ul-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah (no. 203 & 1492)

¹¹ (رضي الله عنه) (rad iyallaahu `anhu) May Allaah be pleased with him

¹² Irwaa-ul-Ghaleel (no. 2455)

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And we know that they (the Sahaabah), may Allaah be pleased with them, did not used to fanatically cling onto one specific madh-hab or to one specific individual. So there was not found amongst them he who was Bakree (a follower of Aboo Bakr), or 'Umaree (a follower of 'Umar), or 'Uthmaanee (a follower of 'Uthmaan) or 'Alawee (a follower of 'Alee) (رضي الله عنهم). Rather, if it were more easy for one of them to ask Aboo Bakr or 'Umar or Aboo Hurairah, he would ask any of them. This is because they believed that it was not permissible to have total and unrestricted devotion in following, except to one individual. Indeed, he was the Messenger of Allaah (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the one who did not speak from his own desire, rather it was only revelation revealed to him.

And if we were to submit to these criticisers, for the sake of argument, that we would name ourselves "Muslims" only, without ascribing ourselves to the Salaf – in spite of it being an honourable and correct ascription. Would they abandon classifying themselves with the names of their parties or their madh-habs or their ways – based on the fact that they are not prescribed in the Religion nor are they correct?

"So this contrast between us is enough for you
And every container becomes wet due to what is in it."

And Allaah is the Guide to the Right Path. And He, free is He from all defects, is the One in whom we seek assistance.