

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Class Notes – Lesson 3

وَمِنَ الْإِيمَانِ بِاللَّهِ: الْإِيمَانُ بِمَا وَصَفَ بِهِ نَفْسَهُ فِي كِتَابِهِ الْعَزِيزِ، وَمَا وَصَفَهُ بِهِ رَسُولُهُ مُحَمَّدٌ ﷺ مِنْ غَيْرِ تَحْرِيفٍ وَلَا تَعْطِيلٍ، وَمِنْ غَيْرِ تَكْيِيفٍ وَلَا تَمَثِيلٍ، بَلْ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ ﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾ [الشورى: ١١]

Part of faith in Allah is to believe in what He has described Himself with in His Book and what His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ has described him with, without distorting (tahreef), denying (ta'teel), questioning how (takyeef) or likening (tamtheel); rather they believe about Allah that: 'Nothing is like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing'. [al-Shura: 11]

وَمِنَ الْإِيمَانِ بِاللَّهِ: الْإِيمَانُ بِمَا وَصَفَ بِهِ نَفْسَهُ فِي كِتَابِهِ الْعَزِيزِ، وَمَا وَصَفَهُ بِهِ رَسُولُهُ مُحَمَّدٌ ﷺ

Part of faith in Allah is to believe in what He has described Himself with in His Book and what His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ has described him with.

- After the author concisely mentioned the foundations of Imaan which constitute the creed of *Ahlu Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* and which every individual must believe in, he commenced their explanation in more detail. He began with the first foundation which is the belief in Allah, and mentioned that it includes believing in His Attributes with which He described Himself with in His Book, or that His Messenger ﷺ described Him with in the Sunnah.
- (وَمِنَ الْإِيمَانِ بِاللَّهِ) – '*Part of Imaan in Allah*'. In the previous lesson it was mentioned that Imaan in Allah comprises Imaan in His Lordship (*Ruboobiyah*), Worship (*Uloohiyya*) and in His Names and Attributes (*Asmaa' wal-Sifaat*). The author will explain the latter of these (*Asmaa' wal-Sifaat*), which is why he mentioned that it was part of Imaan in Allah rather than the whole.
- (الْإِيمَانُ بِمَا وَصَفَ بِهِ نَفْسَهُ) – '*Is to believe in what He has described Himself with*'. The author should have also added: '*And what He named Himself with*', however, he only mentioned the Attributes either because there is no Name of Allah except that it has an Attribute, or because the disagreement regarding the Names of Allah is less when compared to the disagreement in His Attributes.
- (فِي كِتَابِهِ) – '*In His Book*'. Meaning the Quran. It is referred to as a *kitaab* because it is written (*maktoob*) in *al-Lawh al-Mahfoot*' (The Preserved Tablet), written in the pages carried by the Nobel Angles and written among the people in the *Masaahif*. Allah attributed the Quran to Himself because it is His Speech which He spoke. Every letter in the Quran is from Allah.

- There are some important principles which must be understood regarding the Imaan in Allah's Attributes:
 1. That the Attributes of Allah are from the knowledge of the unseen (*ghayb*). Like all matters of the unseen, we believe in them as they are, resorting to the textual proofs alone.
 2. The obligation of interpreting the evidences in the Quran and Sunnah according to their apparent meanings. For example, wrongly interpreting Allah's Eyes as His Seeing or His Hands as His Favour.
 3. That there is no room for the intellect concerning the Names and Attributes of Allah. The basis is the Quran and Sunnah, in contrast to the *Asha'riah*, *Mu'tazila* and the *Jahmiyya* who use their intellect to affirm or negate the Attributes.
- (وَبِمَا وَصَفَهُ بِهِ رَسُولُهُ مُحَمَّدٌ ﷺ) – 'And what His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ has described Him with'. The Messenger's description of his Lord can be divided into three categories.

1. His sayings, such as when he said:

« لَا وَمَقَلَّبِ الْقُلُوبِ »

No, by the One Who turns the hearts. [Bukhari]

He swore by one of Allah's great Attributes, which is His ability to turn the hearts.

2. His actions, such as when he raised his finger to the heavens on the day of Arafah during his farewell *hajj* asking Allah to testify that he had conveyed His message.
3. His approvals, such as when he asked the slave girl: 'Where is Allah?' She replied: 'Above the heavens'. He approved her answer by ordering that she be freed. 0

مِنْ غَيْرِ تَحْرِيفٍ وَلَا تَعْطِيلٍ، وَمِنْ غَيْرِ تَكْيِيفٍ وَلَا تَمْثِيلٍ

Without distorting (*tahreef*), denying (*ta'teel*), questioning how (*takyeef*) or likening (*tamtheel*).

- (مِنْ غَيْرِ تَحْرِيفٍ) – 'Without distorting'. *Ahlu Sunnah* believe in the Attributes of Allah without distorting their meanings. *Tahreef* means to change and twist a matter from its true meanings. *Tahreef* in the Attributes of Allah is of two types:
 1. Distorting its wordings, such as those who deny that Allah speaks. For example, in Surat al-Nisaa' Allah says:

﴿ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا ﴾

And Allah spoke to Musa directly. [al-Nisaa': 164]

They put a *fathah* on the name of Allah (instead of the *dhamma*) to give the impression that it was Musa who spoke to Allah.

2. Distorting the meaning, such as those who interpret Allah's *Rahmah* (Mercy) as His intention to grant favour, and that Allah's *Ghadab* (Anger) means His intention to punish. Similarly, those who interpret Allah's *istiwaa'* (rose over and ascended) on His Throne as meaning *istiwlaa* (took over).
- (وَلَا تَعْطِيلٍ) – 'Without denying'. Meaning to reject the Attributes of Allah. The difference between *tahreef* (distortion) and *ta'teel* (denial) is that *tahreef* is to reject the correct meanings of the Quran and Sunnah and to replace them with other incorrect meanings. On the other hand, *ta'teel* is to deny the correct meanings without giving an alternative meaning like what the *Mufawidah*. Every person who makes *tahreef* makes *ta'teel*, but not every person who makes *ta'teel* makes *tahreef*.

- (وَمِنْ غَيْرِ تَكْيِيفٍ) – ‘*And without questioning how*’. Meaning to ask about the manner and reality of the Attributes of Allah (*kayfah*). Asking about the reality of Allah’s Attributes is something which is beyond the capacity of a persons understanding, because Allah has kept this knowledge to Himself. When Imam Malik was asked about the ‘how’ of Allah’s *istiwa* on His Throne, He responded by saying: ‘*The istiwaa’ is known, the ‘how’ (kayf) is unknown, believing in it is obligatory and asking about it is an innovation*’.
- (وَلَا تَمَثِيلٍ) – ‘*And without likening*’. Meaning without comparing His Noble Attributes to the attributes of His creation. For example, saying that Allah’s Hand is like our hand, or that Allah’s Essence is like our essence. A believer who affirms the Oneness of Allah must affirm the Attributes of Allah in a manner befitting His Majesty.

بَلْ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ ﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾ [الشورى: ١١]

Rather they believe about Allah that: ‘Nothing is like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing’. [al-Shura: 11]

- (بَلْ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ ﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾) – ‘*Rather, they believe about Allah that: ‘Nothing is like Him, and He is the All-Hearing the All-Seeing*’. After the author mentioned the obligation of believing in Allah’s Attributes without *tahreef*, *ta’teel*, *takyeeef* or *tamtheel*, He mentioned the clear methodology which *Ahlu Sunnah wal-Jamaah* adhere to when affirming the Attributes of Allah. It is as per Allah’s saying in Surat al-Shura:

﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾

Nothing is like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. [al-Shura: 11]

Allah’s saying: ‘*Nothing is like Him*’ refutes those who make *tamtheel* and *takyeeef*, while His saying: ‘*And He is the All-Hearing the All-Seeing*’ refutes those who make *tahreef* and *ta’teel*.

This *ayah* is a principle in understanding the Names and Attributes of Allah because it combines between the affirmation of these Names and Attributes, and between negation that anything is like them.

Review Questions

1. Why did the author exclude the mention of Allah’s Names and only mentioned belief in His Attributes?
2. ‘*It is obligatory to interpret the evidences in the Quran and Sunnah according to their apparent meanings*’. Explain how this important principle is applicable to the Attributes of Allah.
3. What are the three ways in which the Prophet ﷺ described Allah to his *ummah*?
4. What are the two types of *tahreef*, and what is the difference between *tahreef* and *ta’teel*?
5. Explain how *ayah* 11 in Surat al-Shura refutes those who make *tahreef*, *tamtheel*, *ta’teel* and *takyeeef* of Allah’s attributes.