

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Class Notes – Lesson 6

وَهُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ قَدْ جَمَعَ فِيهَا وَصَفَ وَسَمَّى بِهِ نَفْسَهُ بَيْنَ النَّفْيِ وَالْإِثْبَاتِ. فَلَا عُدُولَ لِأَهْلِ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ عَمَّا جَاءَ بِهِ الْمُرْسَلُونَ؛ فَإِنَّهُ الصِّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيمُ، صِرَاطُ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ.

He, Glorious is He, has combined negation and affirmation in what He described and named Himself with. Consequently, Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jama'ah have no recourse but to turn to what the Messengers brought, for that is the Straight Path; the path of those whom Allah favored; the path of the Prophets, the sincerely truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous.

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Here, the author explained that Allah combined between negation and affirmation regarding what He named and attributed Himself with. This is because the completeness of Allah's perfection will not be achieved except with the affirmation of the attributes of perfection and the negation of what contradicts them among the attributes of imperfection.

- (وَهُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ قَدْ جَمَعَ) – *'He, Glorious is He, has combined'*. This is an elaboration of the methodology Allah has described in His Book in affirming His Names and Attributes. It is obligatory for the believers to adopt this methodology when affirming the Names and Attributes of Allah.
- (فِيهَا وَصَفَ وَسَمَّى بِهِ نَفْسَهُ) – *'In what He described and named Himself with'*. This is regarding all His Names and Attributes which He has attributed to Himself. All of them follow this methodology.
- (بَيْنَ النَّفْيِ وَالْإِثْبَاتِ) – *'Between negation and affirmation'*. That is, negating and rejecting whatever contradicts His perfection from the various types of defects and deficiencies, such as an equal or a counterpart, or that He is overtaken by slumber, sleep, death or exhaustion. Also affirming the Attributes of perfection which He has described Himself with. For example, His saying in Surat al-Hashr:

﴿ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَلِيقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴾

'He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor of all things, the Fashioner. To Him belong the Best Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorify Him. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. [al-Hashr: 24]

Allah's Attributes can be divided into three categories:

1. Attributes of absolute perfection: They are Attributes which are affirmed for Allah without any restrictions. For example, that Allah speaks, and that He does what He wills, and other similar attributes.
2. Attributes of restrictive perfection: Allah is not described with these Attributes except with the condition that they are mentioned in opposition to those who are doing it. If this condition is present, then affirming it is perfection, otherwise it is incorrect to ascribe it to Allah. For example, the attribute of plotting is only attributed to Allah in response to the plotting of the disbelievers. Allah says:

﴿ وَيَمْكُرُونَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَكْرِينَ ﴾

But they plot, and Allah plots, and He is the best of plotters. [al-Anfaal: 30]

3. Attributes of absolute imperfection: Allah is not described with them under any circumstance, conditionally or otherwise, because they are attributes of absolute imperfection. For example, that Allah is incapable, or betrays, or that He is blind or deaf. Allah says:

﴿ وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَأَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ ﴾

And if they intend to deal treacherously with you, they have indeed been treacherous to Allah before, so He empowered you over them. [al-Anfaal: 71]

He did not say that He betrayed them in return, because betrayal is a form of deception in a situation of trust which is an imperfection. There is no praiseworthy element to it. All attributes of imperfection are negated from Allah.

The Attributes which are derived from His Beautiful Names are perfect in every circumstance. For example, His Hearing is a perfect attribute which is indicated by His Name *al-Samee'* (the All-Hearer). This is a separate category because it is straightforward and does not require much elaboration. This is because Allah described His Names as being *husnaa* (beautiful):

﴿ وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ﴾

And to Allah belong the most beautiful Names, so invoke Him by them. [al-Araaf: 180]

Therefore, it necessitates that any attributes derived from His Beautiful Names are also beautiful and perfect.

فَلَا عُدُولَ لِأَهْلِ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ عَمَّا جَاءَ بِهِ الْمُرْسَلُونَ؛ فَإِنَّهُ الصِّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيمُ، صِرَاطُ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ.

Consequently, Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jama'ah have no recourse but to turn to what the Messengers brought, for that is the Straight Path; the path of those whom Allah favored; the path of the Prophets, the sincerely truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous.

The term 'udul means to renunciate, turn away and to deviate. The author included this statement to clarify that due to the completeness of their adherence, it is not possible that Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jama'ah deviate from what the Messengers came with. Rather their path is to say: 'We hear and obey the rulings, and we hear and trust the information.'

From that which they do not deviate, is the affirmation of Allah's perfect Attributes, and exalting Him from that which does not befit His Majesty. This is because the Messengers have established this great foundation.

- (فَاِنَّهُ الصِّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيمُ) – 'For that is the Straight Path'. Meaning, that the path which Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jama'ah do not deviate from concerning the Names and Attributes of Allah, and which the Messengers came with is the Straight Path (al-Siraat al-Mustaqeem). It has no bends or crookedness, nor does it deviate to the right or to the left. It is what a believer asks Allah for in their recitation of Surat al-Fatihah in every raka'at of prayer:

﴿ اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴾

Guide us to the straight path. [al-Fatihah: 6]

This Straight Path is sometimes attributed to Allah and other times it is attributed to the believers. Allah says:

﴿ وَاَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ ﴾

And verily, this is my straight path, so follow it. [al-An'aam: 153]

﴿ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ﴾

The path of those whom You have bestowed Your Favour. [al-Fatihah: 7]

When it is attributed to Allah it is because He legislated it and laid it down, and when it is attributed to the believers it is because they follow it and adhere to it.

- (صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ) – 'The path of those whom Allah favoured'. Meaning, the Straight Path that the Messengers have brought concerning the matters of aqeedah, and which Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah adhere to, is the path of those whom Allah has favoured. Allah has favoured them by granting them eternal success in this world and in the Hereafter. This is why Allah has commanded us to make du'aa to Him that He guides us to their path and keeps us steadfast upon it. They are four categories of people.
- (النَّبِيِّينَ) – 'The Prophets'. They are those Allah chose and gave His Prophethood and Messengership to.
- (الصَّادِقِينَ) – 'The Sincerely truthful'. They are those who have reached the highest levels of honesty (sidq) and belief (tasdeeq). They readily submit to the Messengers, while maintaining their sincerity to Allah.
- (الشُّهَدَاءِ) – 'The martyrs'. They are the ones who were slain fighting in the path of Allah. The martyr was named a shaheed because Allah and His angels affirm and testify that they will enter Paradise (mash'hoodun lahom).
- (الصَّالِحِينَ) – 'The righteous'. They are those who promptly fulfil the rights of Allah and the rights of His servants.

The author derived this last statement from Surat al-Nisaa' whereby Allah says:

﴿ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ
وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا ﴿٦٩﴾ ﴾

And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger will be with the ones whom Allah has favoured of the prophets, the sincerely truthful, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those in companions. [al-Nisaa': 69]

This *ayah* is a consolation to those who follow this Straight Path and may feel estranged from the people of their time who have deviated from this path. Their fellow travellers on this path are the Prophets, the sincerely truthful, the martyrs and the righteous.

Review Questions

1. Complete the following statement: *'The completeness of Allah's perfection will not be achieved except with ...'*
2. Regarding the attributes of Allah, explain what an attribute of restrictive perfection is.
3. Explain the following statement: *'The Attributes which are derived from Allah's Beautiful Names are perfect in every circumstance'*.
4. How do we reconcile between the Straight Path sometimes being attributed to Allah, and other times being attributed to the believers?
5. What are the four categories of people whom Allah has bestowed His favour upon?