



Obstacles in the Path of Knowledge: Seeking Ilm For Other Than The Sake Of Allah

An explanation of some points from “Obstacles in the Path of Knowledge” (of Shaikh Abdus-Salaam Burjis) by Abu Hakeem Bilaal Davies. Transcribed by Hisham Abu Maryam and Umm Maryam for SalafiPublications.Com, edited and amended by Abu Iyaad Amjad Rafiq, checked by Abu Talhah Dawud Burbank.

Introduction

All Praise is due to Allaah, we praise Him, seek His aid and His Forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allaah from the evils of our souls and the evils of our actions. Whomsoever Allaah guides there is none to misguide and whomsoever Allaah misguides there is none to guide. I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allaah, alone, without any partners and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.

The Shaykh begins with the famous hadeeth of Umar ibn Al-Khattab (radiallahu anhu) in the two Sahih’s (Bukhari and Muslim) that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) said: “Actions are but by intentions...”

And Abu Muslim al-Khawlaanee (rahimahullah): “Nothing stops a person from the path of Allah, like seeking to be praised by the people.”

Hishaam ud-Dastuwaa’ee (one of the Imam’s of the past with a high level of fiqh and very trustworthy - rahimahullah) said: “By Allah! I am not able to say that I went out one day seeking hadith for the sake of Allah.” Reported by Imam Ad-Dhahabee.

Shu’bah said: “There is no-one from the people about whom I could say that he sought the hadith intending only Allah, except for Hishaam – the one who used to trade in cloth from Dastoo. He used to say ‘would that we are saved with regard to hadith, such that we escape with it being neither for us or against us.’ Then Shu’bah said if Hishaam used to say that, then what about us?” (as-Siyar 7/150).

Imam Ad-Dhahabee commented “And I am not able to do so also. Because verily the Salaf were individual’s who used to seek hadeeth for the sake of Allah. And they gained nobility because of it and became Imam’s who were followed, who were points of guidance. Another set of people went out and searched them (hadeeth), firstly they did not have the correct intention, they did not do it for the sake of Allah. And they obtained awareness and took themselves to account. And then the Ilm, because of them gaining it, pulled them to having Ikhlaas.”

Shaykh Burjis goes on to mention the hadeeth of the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) collected by Ibn Majah and is authentic which states:

“The one who makes all of his concerns, one concern (and that is the concern of the hereafter), Allah will suffice him in regards to the concerns of the dunya. And whoever is split by chasing the affairs (problems) of the dunya then Allah will not be concerned which one of those things He destroys them in.” (Declared ‘hasan’ by Shaykh Naasir in ‘ Saheeh Ibn Maaajah’ no. 207)

Shaykh Burjis goes on to mention: “Verily the thing that is most important for a taalib (student) to be concerned with is nurturing and curing his niyaah (intention) and correcting it and protecting it from becoming corrupted. If a taalib-ul-Ilm (student of knowledge) intends by his Ilm something from the dunya, then, firstly he has been disobedient to his Lord. And he has tired himself out and his sin will return back to him and nothing will come to him from the dunya except that which was written for him.”

Hasan al-Basree (rahimahullah) said: “Whoever seeks Ilm for the dunya then that is his portion of that Ilm. And whoever seeks Ilm for the hereafter then he will obtain it.” (Collected by al-Khateeb al Baghdaadi in Iqtidaa’ul Ilmil ‘Amal’ p 66)

Ibn al-Mubarak (rahimahullah) mentioned: “The beginning of Ilm is to have the correct niyaah, then for you to take heed and listen, then understand it, then memorise it, then to act upon it and then to spread it.” (Collected by Ibn Abdil Barr in ‘Jaami’ Bayaanul Ilm wa Fadlihi).

This explains the saying of Allah, the Most High: “Say (O Muhammad sallallahu alaihi wassallam): ‘This is my way, I invite unto Allah with sure knowledge [baseerah]... (Yusuf 12:108).

With regards to this ayah, Shaykh Ibn Uthaimen (hafidhahullah) mentioned that baseerah comprises of three things: “That a person calls to Allah upon baseerah with the condition of those people to whom he calls. And baseerah as to how he calls. Then baseerah regarding that to which he is calling to”. He says concerning the statement of Allah, “Say this is my way I call to Allah upon baseerah”... that which is intended by his (Allah’s) statement, “...upon baseerah” is not knowledge of the sharee’ah alone, rather it includes knowledge of the sharee’ah (ie the religion), knowledge of the condition of those being called, and knowledge of the way of reaching the intent and that is hikmah. So he has baseerah with the rulings of the sharee’ah, with the condition of those being called, and with the manner and way in which we carry out the da’wah”. From ‘al Qawl al Mufeed’ (1/161 2nd edition).

Shaykh Burjis brings a note that the ayah: “...So be afraid of Allah, and Allah will teach you...”. (al-Baqarah 2:282). The second half of this ayah is Allah informing us that it is He who teaches us, (not that if you fear Allah, you gain knowledge).

Imam Seebawayh (rahimahullah) (one of the great Imam’s with regards to the language and grammar - great just like the Imam al-Bukhari - rahimahullah) mentioned: “That the ‘and’ (wa) which occurs in this ayah is the ‘and’ which is referred to as the ‘atf’ - it connects

something to something else. It is connected to it only by way of mentioning it together and not that the second half of the ayah comes as a result of actualising the first half.”

[Br. Abu Hakeem explained as brothers found this difficult to understand. If we take the ayah to mean that fearing Allah brings knowledge then we are turning the ayah back to front in meaning. As Ilm is what brings about taqwa. In other words Allaah teaches, and this brings about taqwaa].

Benefits From This Lesson

1. All actions are judged by the intentions behind them.
2. Seeking the praise of people is one of the greatest of obstacles in actually traversing the path of Allah.
3. The Salaf were scared to affirm sincerity for themselves, until even in a single one of their actions. This is the way of the most knowledgeable of the Imaams of the Salaf, in all times and ages.
4. Making ones sole concern to be for the Hereafter puts in order the affairs of the world, and making one's concern the affairs of the world, brings about destruction.
5. The most important affair for the one who seeks knowledge is to keep an eye on his intention, to cure it, purify it, nurture it and develop it – since in an incorrect intention is disobedience to the Lord – before one has even acted or moved a limb!
6. The life-cycle of knowledge is to have a pure intention, pay careful attention and listen, understand, memorise, act, and then to teach it. Whoever brings all of this has “matured” with the knowledge he has gained.
7. The meaning of sure knowledge (baseerah) and that it is in three things: the actual knowledge itself, the knowledge of those being called to and the manner of conveyance that helps to effect the desired goal.
8. Allaah is the one who grants and bestows knowledge, and taqwaa arises from that.