



Obstacles in the Path of Knowledge: Relying Upon the Books Rather than the Scholars

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.

Shaykh Burjis mentions firstly that a person having the trust in himself to go to the books and not needing a teacher is a type of sickness.

Imam ash-Shafi’ee (rahimahullah) mentioned: “Whoever seeks Ilm from the belly of the books, he will let the ahkaam go to waste.” (Tadhkiratu Saami’ Wal Mutakallim p.87). And some of the Salaf mentioned: “From the greatest afflictions and tribulations are those who become shayukh through the sahifah (parchments which the Salaf used to write upon, before they had books as we know today)”.

Sulaimaan ibn Musa al-Amawi (rahimahullah) mentioned: “The Qur’aan is not to be taken from the mushafiyyeen (a person who does not have a teacher, but teaches the Qur’aan to himself) and do not take the Ilm from the sahifiyyeen (a person who just goes to the scrolls, without having a shaykh).” Sa’eed ibn Abdul Aziz (rahimahullah - likened to the likes of Imam az-Zuhri) mentioned: “The Ilm is not to be taken from a sahafiy and do not take the Qur’aan from a mushafiyy.”

Ibn Butlaan (rahimahullah) mentioned: “From the reasons that it is prohibited and not liked by the Salaf to do this is because of that which may occur, by a person who is a beginner in Ilm, easily confusing one for the other (due to early Arabic having no vowel symbols [fatha, kasra etc.] or dots etc.) This being the case, the Alim who is firmly grounded in his Ilm will be able to take a book and the student will allow him to read the book to him and explain to him the words.

Likewise what may take place by the slip of the sight, misunderstanding a word and a person not having much understanding of (the science of the language) as how the word should end. (The Shaykh can clarify this to the student). And writing down something of benefit which is not in the book and reading that which is not written (i.e. A word missing in the book etc.) Likewise a misprint in a text or book.”

Benefits From This Lesson

1. It is important to learn under the supervision and guidance of a scholar or teacher.
2. It is important to study books under the people of knowledge.
3. It is important to attain the understandings and explanations of the people of knowledge of books and written documents.
4. The absence of any of the above leads to “half-baked” knowledge and makes one prone to many mistakes.