



Maktabah  
Salafiyyah

# DEFINING SALAFIYYAH

## And Its Call (Da'wah)

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PART 1 (v. 1.2)

# Defining Salafiyyah And Its Call (Da'wah)

By Abu Khadeejah 'Abdul-Wāhid Alam

*All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all creation; may Allah extol the mention of our noble Prophet Muhammad in the highest company of Angels and give him peace and security—and his family, his Companions and all those who follow him correctly until the establishment of the Hour.*

## Some Important Notes

**Islam** is the Religion of all the Prophets, from Ādam to Muhammad (ﷺ).<sup>1</sup> A Muslim is anyone who embraces this Religion and acts upon it. Muslims submit to Allāh and worship none except the one true God (*Al-Ilāh*), and He is Allāh. Muslims shun all forms of polytheism and idolatry and they follow the teachings of final Messenger (ﷺ) sent to mankind.<sup>2</sup> Muslims obey Allāh and His Messenger

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<sup>1</sup> Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) stated: “Whoever desires a religion other than Islam, then it will never be accepted from him and in the Hereafter, he will be among the losers.” (Āli ‘Imrān: 85), and He (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) said: “Indeed, the only religion with Allah is Islam.” (Āli ‘Imrān: 19)

<sup>2</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “By Him in whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, there is not a person who

(صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) unconditionally.<sup>3</sup> This is the basis of Salafiyyah.

**The Sunnah** is the Path of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and his Companions.<sup>4</sup> Whoever follows this path exactly is referred to as a *Sunni* or *Salafi* and he is from

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**hears of me in this Ummah, whether he be a Jew or Christian, and then dies without believing in what I was sent with except that he will be from the people of Hellfire.”** (Muslim, no. 153)

<sup>3</sup> Abul-‘Āliyāh (d. 90H, رَحِمَهُ اللّٰهُ) said: “Learn Islam—and when you have learned it, do not turn away from it, and upon you is to remain on the Straight Path for that is Islam. And do not deviate from Islam, neither to the right nor to the left. And upon you is to hold fast to the Sunnah of your Prophet (صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and whatever his Companions were upon and stay away from these desires (deviations) that sow enmity and hatred between the people.” (*Sharh Usūl I’tiqād Ahlis-Sunnah wal-Jamā’ah* of Al-Lālikā’ī, 1/54, *As-Sunnah* of Al-Marwazi, p. 8)

<sup>4</sup> Imām Al-Awzā’ī (d. 157H, رَحِمَهُ اللّٰهُ) said: “Keep yourself patiently upon the Sunnah, stop where the people [before you] stopped, speak with what they spoke with, and withhold from what they withheld from—and **take the path of your Salaf as-Sālih for indeed what sufficed them will suffice you.**” (*Sharh Usūl I’tiqād Ahlis-Sunnah wal-Jamā’ah* of Al-Lālikā’ī, 1/147, *Ash-Sharī’ah* of Al-Ājurri, 2/673)

*Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the term *Sunni* is used more generally to refer to anyone who is not from the Shi'ite sect. However, merely being a non-Shi'ite is not sufficient to save a person from falling into deviation.

### ***As-Salaf As-Sālih* (The Pious Predecessors)**

The Salaf are the Muslims of the early virtuous generations. Whoever follows their path and proceeds upon their methodology is a Salafi.<sup>6</sup> So the Salaf are the Companions of Muhammad (ﷺ) and those who followed them from early generations.

The usage of the term Salaf<sup>7</sup> was widespread among the early Muslims and was used to guide people to the *Minhāj* (Methodology) of the *Sahābah* and those

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<sup>5</sup> Imām Al-Barbahāri (d. 329H رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) stated: “Islām is the Sunnah and the Sunnah is Islam, and one cannot be established without the other.” (See *Sharh as-Sunnah*, p. 1)

<sup>6</sup> Al-Awzā'ī (d. 157H رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) said: “Upon you are the narrations of the Salaf, even if the people abandon you. And stay away from the opinions of men, even if they are beautified with speech.” (*Sharh Usūl I'tiqād Ahlis-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah* of Al-Lālikā'ī, 1/147)

<sup>7</sup> The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to Fātimah (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا) on his deathbed: “**Fear Allah and be patient for indeed I am for you a blessed Salaf.**” i.e., a blessed predecessor. (Muslim, no. 2450)

who followed them. Ahmad bin Muhammad Al-Qal-shāni (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ d. 863H) stated: “The *Salaf as-Sālih* are the earliest generation of those firmly-grounded in knowledge, guided by the guidance of the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), preservers of his *Sunnah*—Allāh chose them to accompany his Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) and to establish His Religion. Allah, the Most High, was pleased with them as the *Imāms* and leaders of this Ummah. They strived in the cause of Allah with a true striving, they fulfilled their duty, benefited the Ummah and exerted themselves for the pleasure of Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ).”<sup>8</sup>

Imām Ibn Bāz (d. 1420H, رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) stated: “The *Salaf* are the best of generations—and whoever follows their Path and proceeds on their Methodology is a *Salafi*—and whoever opposes their Path is from the latter day opposers (*Khalaḥ*).”

The Righteous *Salaf* are *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā’ah*<sup>9</sup>,

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<sup>8</sup> See *Tahrīr al-Maqālah fī Sharḥ ar-Risālah*, 36.

<sup>9</sup> i.e., The People of *Sunnah* and the United Body upon the Truth (*al-Jamā’ah*). Abdullāh Ibn Mas’ūd (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) stated, “**The majority of the people abandon the *Jamā’ah*. The *Jamā’ah* is whatever agrees with the truth even if you on your own.**” Reported by Al-Lālikā’ī in *Sharḥ Usūlil-I’tiqād* (1/121, no. 160), declared *sahīh* by Al-Albānī in his notes on *Mishkāṭ Al-Masābīḥ* (1/61).

As'hābul-Hadīth,<sup>10</sup> Ahlul-Athar<sup>11</sup> and Ahlul-Hadīth.<sup>12</sup> Whoever accepts them and follows their path precisely in belief, methodology and religious practice is upon true guidance. They are the one Saved Sect among the seventy-three<sup>13</sup> and the Aided Group in

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<sup>10</sup> i.e., The Companions of Hadith.

<sup>11</sup> i.e., The People of Narrations. Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) was asked: "Who are the best of people?" He replied: **"Me and those with me, then those who follow their tradition (Athar), and then those follow their tradition (Athar)."** Then it was as if he declined those who remained. (Ahmad, no. 8483 from Abu Hurairah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and declared *hasan* by Al-Albāni in *As-Sahīhah*, no. 1839).

<sup>12</sup> i.e., The People of Hadith. Ibn Mas'ūd (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: **"May Allah make radiant the face of the person who hears a Hadīth from us and conveys it, for perhaps the one to whom it is conveyed may preserve it better than the one who hears it."** (Ibn Mājah no. 232, Tirmidhi no. 2657, Ahmad 1/436 and declared *sahīh* by Al-Albāni in *Sahīh Al-Jāmi'* no. 6764).

<sup>13</sup> Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said: **"The Children of Israel divided into seventy-two sects, and my Ummah will divide into seventy-three. All of them will be in the Fire except one sect."** They asked: **"And which sect is that O Messenger of Allah?"** He said: **"What I am upon and my Companions."** (At-Tirmidhi no. 2642, declared *hasan* by Al-Albāni)

every generation that is unharmed by those who oppose them and differ with them<sup>14</sup> as is mentioned in the authentic narrations.

**Salafiyyah** (or *Salafism*) is the true Path in following Islam and the Sunnah. A **Salafi**<sup>15</sup> is one who follows the path of the Salaf As-Sālih precisely without alteration, innovation and deviation.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said: **"There shall not cease to be a group from my Ummah obedient to the commands of Allah. They are not harmed by those who betray them or those who oppose them. They will remain as such until the Decree of Allah comes [close to the Hour], and they will be manifest over the people."** (Muslim no. 1037).

<sup>15</sup> The term *Salafi* was used among the early generations. Muhammad bin Khalaf, well-known as Waki' (رحمته الله, d. 306H) said in his biography of Ismā'il bin Hammād (رحمته الله): "Ismā'il bin Hammād bin Abī Hanīfah was a **true Salafi**." (see *Akhhbār al-Qudāt*, 2/167)

Imām Adh-Dhahabi (d. 748H, رحمته الله) cited the saying of Imām Ad-Dāruqutni (d. 385H, رحمته الله): "There is nothing that I hate more than theological rhetoric." Then Adh-Dhahabi commented: "This man, Ad-Dāruqutni, never spoke with theological rhetoric nor argumentation and he never entered into it, **rather he was a Salafi!**" (*Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā*, 16/457)

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728H, رحمته الله) said: "There is no criticism upon the one who makes manifest the *Madhhab*

The terms *Salafi*, *Sunni*, *Athari*, *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah*, *As'hābul-Hadeeth* and *Ahlul-Hadeeth* are interchangeable. All these titles refer to the same body of people who follow the same path. However, not everyone who uses these titles is a true adherent of what they represent. In fact, the majority of people who ascribe themselves to these labels have beliefs and methodologies in opposition to the path of the *Salaf As-Sālih*. To distinguish between a mere claimant and a true adherent is one the main purposes of this book.

Imām ‘Abdul-‘Azīz Ibn Bāz (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) was asked about Saved Sect, so he replied: **“They are the *Salafis* and everyone who treads the Path of the *Salaf as-Sālih*.”**<sup>17</sup> He was asked on another occasion: “What do you say about the one who calls himself a *Salafi* or *Athari*? Is this considered self-praise?” So, he (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) answered: “If he is truthful that he is *Athari* or *Salafi*, then there is no problem just as the *Salaf* would say, ‘So-and-so is a *Salafi*, so-and-so is *Athari*.’

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(Path) of the *Salaf*, ascribes himself to it (calls himself *Salafi*), and attaches himself to it. Rather, it is obligatory to accept that from him by agreement [of the Muslims] for indeed, the *Madhhab* of the *Salaf* is not except the truth.” (*Majmū’ al-Fatāwā*, 4/149)

<sup>17</sup> *Majmū’ Rasā’il li-Islāh al-Farad wal-Mujtama’* of Muhammad Jamil Zīnū, p. 162.



This praiseworthy attachment is necessary, it is praise that is obligatory.”<sup>18</sup>

To be a Salafi means adhering to the Creed, Methodology and the Religious practices of the *Salaf As-Sālih* (the Pious Predecessors). The earliest of the Salaf was the generation of our Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions (رضي الله عنهم). Then after them came the three virtuous generations of believers who held fast to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions. The person who understands this path correctly, follows it truly, without innovating into it nor deviating from it, is Salafi. To be a Salafi is not merely to imagine that one is upon the path of the Salaf, but Salafiyyah is to know the Methodology of the Companions and to follow it—it was they who understood best the meanings and intent of the speech and actions of the Prophet (ﷺ).

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<sup>18</sup> From a lecture entitled, *Haqqul-Muslim*, date: 16/01/1413H in Tā’if, Saudi Arabia.