

هلك المتطرفون

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salih al-'Uthaymeen
**THOSE WHO GO TO EXTREMES ARE
DESTROYED!¹**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The author [Imam an-Nawawi] رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ narrated on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ood رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ that the Prophet said (ﷺ),

هَلَاكُ الْمُتَطَرِّفُونَ هَلَاكُ الْمُتَطَرِّفُونَ هَلَاكُ الْمُتَطَرِّفُونَ

Those who go to extremes are destroyed! Those who go to extremes are destroyed! Those who go to extremes are destroyed!²

The word الهلاك (destruction) is the opposite of البقاء (continuation). In other words, they will be ruined and in a state of loss. Those who go to extremes are those who are extreme in their worldly and religious affairs. It was also mentioned in another hadith,

لَا تُسَدِّدُوا فَيُسَدِّدَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ

Do not go to extremes for Allah will burden you with those extremes.³

Take for example the story of Bani Isrā'eel when they killed a person which led to them arguing and quarrelling until an ordeal nearly broke out amongst them. So Musā said to them,

¹ Translated by Abu Ameenah AbdurRahmān Bennet from *Sharh Riyāḍ as-Sāliheen*.

² Sahih Muslim 2670.

³ [TN]: The Shaykh does not quote the reference point for this hadith. There is another variation of this hadith with a slightly different wording that Shaykh al-Albāni classifies as weak.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقْرَةً ۖ

﴿ 67. “Indeed, Allah commands you to slaughter a cow.” ﴾

In other words, “He is commanded you to take a part of this slaughtered cow and to strike the dead person with it and then he will inform you of the person who killed him.” So they said to Musā,

أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوءًا ۖ

﴿ “Do you take us in ridicule?” ﴾

In other words, “Are you saying to us to slaughter a cow and then to strike the dead person with a part of it and then he will tell us who killed him?!”

Had they but surrendered to the command of Allah and slaughtered any cow, they would have attained justice. But no, they had to be obstinately difficult and insistently stubborn and so they were destroyed. So then they said to Musā, “Call upon your Lord for us that He may make plain to us what it is!” Then they said, “Call upon your Lord for us to make plain to us its colour.” Then they said, “Call upon your Lord for us to make plain to us what it is and what use it is for” And only after all these conditions were imposed upon them did they slaughter the cow yet they nearly never performed it.

Another example of going to extremes in matters of worship is when a person insists on making things harder for himself in his prayer, his fasting or anything else from the things which Allah has reduced any burden on him. For when he makes things more difficult for himself in matters that Allah has made easy, he is bound to fail. Another instance of this is what some sick people do, especially in Ramadhān. Allah has made it lawful for him to break his fast if he is sick because he needs to eat and drink, but he chooses to make things difficult for himself and continues to fast. The hadith “Those who go to extremes are destroyed!” also applies to him.

Another example of this is what some of the students who labour themselves in matters pertaining to Tawheed. So when they come across some verses or hadith pertaining to Allah’s Attributes, you find them delving into their meanings and asking questioning that they have no been tasked with asking—questions that never circulated amongst the first generations of this Ummah, the Sahābah,

Tābi'een and the rightly guided Imāms who came after them. So you find one of them delving into things that he has not been tasked to delve into due to overenthusiasm and speaking in high-sounding terms. We say to these people that if you are content with what the Sahābah were content with then refrain [from delving into such issues], and if you are not content then Allah will never cause you to be content. Have no doubt that you will fall into difficulty, agitation and distress. For example, some people state that Allah has fingers, as reported in the authentic hadith:

إِنَّ قُلُوبَ بَنِي آدَمَ كُلَّهَا بَيْنَ إصْبَعَيْنِ مِنْ أَصَابِعِ الرَّحْمَنِ

Verily, the hearts of all the sons of Adam are between the two fingers out of the fingers of the Compassionate.⁴

So they open a line of enquiry into these Fingers: **“How many fingers? Do these fingers have fingertips? How many fingertips do these fingers have?”** and other similar lines of enquiry. Another example is when Allah descends to the lowest heavens in the last third of each night. So they say, **“How does He descend? How does Allah descend when the last third on the night is a constantly happening round the earth?”** What they mean is that Allah has to be descending continuously. This all falls under the type of speech which is neither rewarded nor commended; rather, these people are closer to sin than they are safety and closer to dispraise than they are praise. These matters, which the people have not be tasked with to inquire, are from the matters of the unseen. Those who were better than them and keener to understand Allah’s Names and Attribute did not inquire into these matters. Thus, it is incumbent upon them to refrain from delving into such matters and that they say, **“We hear, obey, attest to and believe!”** As for them looking into the more delicate matters that have no benefit then this is undoubtedly a type of going to extremes.

Another example of this is what some of the students of knowledge do is postulating rational possibilities off the back of some textual evidences. So you find them saying, **“This could possibly mean such and such and that could possibly mean such and such”** until the actual benefit of the text becomes completely conflicting and thus lost, and this is wrong. Stick to the apparent meaning of the text and give up these rational possibilities because if we were to impose rational possibilities onto every text in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ), there would not remain a single hadith or verse that the people could cite as evidence. Moreover,

⁴ Sahih Muslim 2655.

these rational questions could well be the imaginations and machinations of the Shaytān that he casts into the hearts of man in order to violently shake the very foundations of his belief and faith, and refuge is sought with Allah!

Another example of this is some of those who go to extremes in their wudhu. You find them performing wudhu three, four, five, six, seven times and even more whilst there is no need for this. This also happens with performing ghusl after post-sexual intercourse. You find them going to great lengths when washing themselves by entering water into their earlobes and nostrils. All of this falls under the statement of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ): **“Those who go to extremes are destroyed! Those who go to extremes are destroyed! Those who go to extremes are destroyed!”** Thus, every person who makes things difficult for himself in matters that Allah has made broad then he is included in this hadith.