

The Prerequisites of the Declaration of Faith

As-salámu ‘alaikum wa rahmatul láhi wa barakátuh!”

“A-úthu billáhi minash shaytánir rajeem. Bismilláhir rahmánir raheem.

Al hamdu lillahi nahmaduhu wanasta’eenahu, wanastagh-firuhu, wanatoobu ilayhi, wana’oothu Billaahi min shuroori an-fusinaa, wamin sayyi aati a’maalinaa.

May- Yahdillahu fa huwal muhtad, wa may- yudlill falan tajidaa lahu waliyan murshida. Wa ash-hadu an Laa ilaaha ill-Alláh, wahdahoo laa shareeka lah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhoo warasooluh”

In the name of Allah most merciful, most compassionate

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This week’s topic is linked to the Prerequisites of the Declaration of Faith

“Everything has its key, and the key to Paradise is the witnessing that there is no god but Allah.”

Yet too many Muslims simply rely upon this statement and believe that as long as they have made this statement, nothing will harm them. They think will be granted Paradise because of this mere verbal statement of the Shahadah.

On uttering these words called Kalima a man undergoes a remarkable transformation. From a Kafir he turns into a Muslim. He was impure before and now he is pure. From being liable to Divine wrath, he becomes a beloved of God. He was destined for Hell before but now the gates of heaven are open for him. The process does not end here.

No sooner these come out of the mouth, the gates of paradise are thrown open. Not so in Islam. Here the principal thing is the meaning. The effect of words lies in the meaning. If they have no meaning and do not go deep into the heart, and if they do not produce a powerful impact so as to effect a change in your thoughts, in your morals and in your actions, then an utterance of mere words will be totally ineffectual.

To explain this point by a simple example. Suppose you feel thirsty and shout the whole day, “ water, water!” your thirst will never be quenched. Of course, if you get hold of water and take a draught, all the rigor of thirst will subside.

There is no question that the mere saying of, “ I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger,” is not sufficient for salvation. In fact, the hypocrites used to make this statement quite often yet Allah describes them as liars and says that they shall abide in the lowest abyss of the Hellfire.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Conditions of La ilaha illa-llah can be summed up under the following pillars:

1. KNOWLEDGE (ILM)

One must understand what the shahadah is affirming and what the shahadah is denying. Allah says in the Quran, “So know that there is no God save Allah, and ask forgiveness for your sin” (Qur’an, Muhammad 19). Similarly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Whoever dies knowing that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah shall enter Paradise.” (Recorded by Muslim)

In fact, the shahadah itself is a testimony. When one testifies to something, one must know what it is that he is testifying concerning. Obviously, a testimony about something that one does not have any knowledge about is absolutely unacceptable. Allah says in the Quran, “Save him who bears witness unto the truth knowingly” (Qur’an, al-Zukhruf 86).

2. CERTAINTY (AL-YAQEEN)

This is the opposite of doubt and uncertainty. In Islam, in fact, any kind of doubt is equivalent to Kufr or disbelief. We must, in our hearts, be absolutely certain of the truth of the shahadah. Our hearts must not be wavering in any way when we testify to the truth of, “There is none worthy of worship except Allah.”

Indeed, Allah describes the hypocrites as those people whose hearts are wavering. For example, Allah says, “They alone seek leave of thee (not to participate in jihad) who believe not in Allah and the Last Day and whose hearts feel doubt, so in their doubt they waver” (Qur’an, al-Tauba 45).

3. ACCEPTANCE (AL-QABOOL)

If a person has the knowledge of and certainty in the shahadah, this must be followed by acceptance, with the tongue and heart, of whatever that shahadah implies. Whoever refuses to accept the shahadah and its implications, even if he knows that it is true and certain about its truth, is a disbeliever. This refusal to accept is sometimes due to pride, envy or other reasons. In any case, the shahadah is not a true shahadah without its unconditional acceptance.

The scholars all talk about this condition as a general condition in the way that I have just stated. However, there is also a more detailed aspect that we must all be aware of. The believer accepts whatever the implications of the shahadah are. This also means that he believes in whatever is stated in the Quran or stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him), without any right to choose what he wants to believe and what he wants to reject. Allah says in the Quran, “Do you believe in part of the book and reject part of it? And what is the reward of those who act in disgrace in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be consigned to the severest punishment” (Qur’an, al-Baqara 85).

This is one aspect that the Muslims must be aware of. Although it is not the same as the complete refusal to accept the truth, by rejecting part of the truth that has come from Allah, one also negates his testimony of faith.

4. SUBMISSION AND COMPLIANCE (AL-INQIYAD)

In fact, this is one of the main meanings of the word Islam itself, “the submission to the will and commands of Allah.” This is what Allah commands in the Quran, “Turn unto Him repentant, and surrender unto Him.” (Qur’an, al-Zumar 54)

Allah has praised those who submit to His command by their actions. Allah says, “Who is better in religion than he who surrenders his purpose to Allah while doing good.” (Qur’an, al-Nisa 125)

Actually, Allah has clearly made it a condition of faith that one submits to the command of Allah and His messenger. Allah says, “But nay, by your Lord, they will not truly believe until they make you [the Messenger of Allah] judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of which you decide, and submit with full submission” (Qur’an, al-Nisa 65).

5. TRUTHFULNESS

This means that when we say the shahadah, we are saying it honestly. We actually mean it. We are not lying when it comes to our testimony of faith.

We are all familiar with those who say the testimony of faith yet they are not saying it honestly. They do not believe in it but they are simply saying it in order to protect themselves or to get some gain from doing so. These are the hypocrites. Allah has described them in the opening of the Quran with the following words, “And of mankind are some who say, ‘We believe in Allah and the Last Day,’ when they believe not. They think to beguile (trick) Allah and those who believe, and they beguile none save themselves, but they perceive not. In their hearts is a disease, and Allah increases their disease. A painful doom is theirs because they lie” (Qur’an, al-Baqara 8-10).

6. SINCERITY (IKHLAS)

And the Prophet (peace be upon him) added, “Allah has forbidden for the Hellfire anyone who says, ‘There is no one worthy of worship except Allah,’ and say so desiring the face [and pleasure] of Allah.” (Recorded by Muslim)

“If anyone comes on the Day of Resurrection who has said la ilaha illallah sincerely from his heart, with the intention to win Allah’s pleasure, Allah will make Hellfire forbidden for him.” (Bukhari)

That is, when we make the shahadah, we must do so solely for the sake of Allah and we must not do it for anyone else’s sake. Allah says in the Quran “And [He desires you to] put your whole being into every act of worship, and to call unto Him, sincere in your faith in Him alone.” (Al-A’raf:29)

7. LOVE (MUHABBAH)

That is, the believer loves this shahadah, he loves in accordance with the shahadah, he loves the implications and requirements of the shahadah and he loves those who act and strive for the sake of this shahadah. This is a necessary condition of the shahadah. If a person makes the shahadah but does not love the shahadah and what

it stands for, then, in fact, his faith is not complete. It is not the faith of a true believer. And if he loves something more than this shahadah or if he loves something more than Allah, then he has negated his shahadah. The true believer, the one meeting the conditions of the shahadah puts no one whatsoever as an equal to Allah in his love.

8. The eighth condition of the shahadah is that the person who makes the shahadah must deny every other object of worship.

Allah clearly reminds us of this important aspect of the shahadah, by stating, “And he who rejects false deities and believes in Allah has grasped a firm handhold which will never break” (Qur’an, al-Baqara 256). Perhaps the Prophet (peace be upon him) made this point even clearer when he said, “Whoever says there is no one worthy of worship except Allah and denies whatever is worshipped besides Allah, then his wealth and blood are protected and his accounting will be with Allah.” (Recorded by Muslim)

9. The ninth condition of the shahadah is that the Muslim adheres to the shahadah until he dies. This is a must if the shahadah is to mean anything for you in the Hereafter. And Allah says in the Quran, “O believers, observe your duty to Allah with right observance, and die not save as Muslims [surrendering yourselves to Allah]” (Qur’an, Ali-Imran 102).

Dear brothers and sisters,

These are the conditions of the shahadah. These are the aspects of the shahadah that each and every one of us should look to in ourselves and ask ourselves, “Is my shahadah meeting those requirements? Am I saying it sincerely, honestly and out of love for Allah? Am I saying it based on what it really means? Am I denying all other false objects of worship?...”

Again, it is not simply a matter of knowing these conditions. Indeed, one can meet many Muslims who have these conditions memorized, yet when one looks to their deeds and behavior, one can see that these conditions have no effect on them. In the Hereafter, such a person’s knowledge of these conditions will be of no avail to him. Indeed, his knowledge will be a proof against him as he clearly knows what the conditions are that he must satisfy yet he has shown that he is not willing to satisfy them in his life.

Alhamdu lillahi Rabbil ‘Aalameen. Was-salaatu was-salaamu alaa Khayril mursaleen. Muhammadin-nabeey-yil Ummiy-yee, wa-‘alaa aalihee, wa sahbihee, aj-ma’een.

Ammaa ba’ad:

Innalláha wa malaaiikata yusallúna alan nabi. Yá ay yuhal latheena ámanu sallú alayhi wasalli mú tas leema. Allahumma salli alá Muhammad, wa ala áli Muhammad, kama salayta ala Ibrahim, wa ala ali Ibrahim. Allahumma barik ala Muhammad, wa alaa áli Muhammad, kama barakta ala Ibrahim, wa ala ali ibrahim. Fil ála meen, innaka hameedun majeed.”