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## **The Deed is the Condition of Faith's Perfection**

**An Excerpt from Shaikh Aḥmad bin Şâliḥ az-Zahrânî's  
*Sharḥ Alfâḍḥ as-Salaf wa Naqḍ Alfâḍḥ al-Khalaf fî Ḥaqîqah al-Îmân***

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## Foreword

**S**urely the praise is for Allah. We praise Him, we ask Him for aid and we ask Him for forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evils of our souls and the misdeeds of our deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, then he has no misguider and whomsoever Allah leaves astray, then he has no guide.

I testify that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah. He is alone, He has no partner. And I testify that Muḥammad ﷺ is His servant and His messenger.

(O those who believed, be godly to Allah with His godliness's right and do not die except as Muslims) (3:102).

(O people, be godly to your Lord who created you from a single soul, and created from it its mate, and from them both sent forth many men and women. And be godly to Allah who you ask of, and [to the relations of] the wombs. Surely Allah is a watcher over you) (4:1).

(O those who believed, be godly to Allah and say a straight word. ! He will rectify your deeds for you and forgive your sins for you. And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger has achieved a tremendous achievement) (33:70-71).

As for what follows, then the truest speech is the speech of Allah, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad ﷺ. The vilest of affairs are their innovations, and every innovation is a heresy, every heresy is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Fire.

## The Deed is the Condition of Faith's Perfection<sup>1</sup>

The word 'condition' in the fundamentalist<sup>2</sup> or dialectic terminology has an indication of the condition's not being included in the quiddity,<sup>3</sup> for the fundamentalists differentiate between the pillar and the condition. So each of the two influence the consideration of [what] they are connected [to] with corruption or the lack of completeness, except that the pillar is included in the thing's reality. As for the condition, then it is outside of the reality of what it is a condition for, with the meaning that it precedes it.

Due to this, if we took expressing the deed with the stipulation with its dialectic terminological sense, it is from the wordings of the Murji'ah, irrespective of its being a condition for validity or a condition for perfection according to one of them.

And irrespective of the perfection according to them, is it the desirable<sup>4</sup> perfection or the obligatory perfection, since the mere expression of the stipulation with the previous meaning is an expression of their belief regarding the deed's being outside of legal faith's reality?

It is from the recognized [facts], however, that the people of knowledge are not restricted by new terminologies in expressing the legal realities, because the condition, with its wider linguistic meaning, does not inform of more than the necessity for the stipulated [thing], regardless of whether it was included in it or it was not like that; al-Fairūzâbâdî said, "The condition is the thing's requirement and necessity."<sup>5</sup>

Due to this, the expression of the deed's being a condition for faith,<sup>6</sup> with the meaning that it is necessary for legal faith, for its completion or its validity according to whoever speaks of that, is easy to swallow for the people of knowledge. According to this, there is no contradiction between expressing the deed with the stipulation with this general meaning and the belief that the deed is a part of faith.

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<sup>1</sup> [t] az-Zahrânî, Aḥmad bin Šâliḥ. *Sharḥ Alfâḍḥ as-Salaf wa Naqḍ Alfâḍḥ al-Khalaf fi Haqîqah al-Îmân*. Abu Dhabi, UAE: Dâr al-Imam Mâlik, 2005. pgs. 323-331.

<sup>2</sup> [t] Ar. usûlî – fundamentalist; legist; traditional; pertaining to the fundamental jurisprudential principles.

<sup>3</sup> [t] Ar. mâhiyyah – quality, quiddity, essence, nature. Quiddity is defined as "the essential nature or ultimate form of something : what makes something to be the type of thing that it is." See quiddity. Merriam-Webster Editorial Staff. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*. G. & C. Merriam Co., 1971. vol. 2, pg. 1865.

<sup>4</sup> [t] Ar. mustahabb – recommended, commendable, desirable; well-liked, popular.

<sup>5</sup> *al-Qâmūs al-Muḥîṭ*, vol. 2, pg. 542, and likewise, *al-Mu'jam al-Wasîṭ*, pg. 479.

<sup>6</sup> From the closest of [those] I heard expressing the deed with the stipulation is Shaikh Ibn 'Uthaimîn ? in *Sharḥ Kitâb al-Îmân min Şaḥîḥ al-Bukhârî*.

Determining the sense and the intent of this stipulation remains dependant on the customary [usage] of the speaker and his dogmatic history. Thus, if he was from the People of the Sunnah, the proponents [that say] the deed is from faith, we recognize that his intent is the general necessity for faith, while if he were from the people of [theological] rhetoric or the Murji'ah, we recognize that his intent with the stipulation is negation of the deed's inclusion in faith.

This foundation, i.e., the lack of imposing the terminology of latter [scholars] from the people of [theological] rhetoric and [jurisprudential] fundamentals on the customary or linguistic wordings, is extremely important so that we can come to comprehend the objectives of the imams and the people of knowledge from their wordings. [This is so that] we do not fall into [accusing] one of them of error, suspecting [them], or even misunderstanding the words, because of appealing their wordings to the judgement of the terminologies of the companions of the disciplines, especially if we know of these disciplines' being influenced by the innovated dialectic terminology and that most of the compilers in these disciplines—like the fundamentals of jurisprudence, for example—are from the people of [theological] rhetoric who include in these sciences what is not from them.

**From that, for example,** is that the expression of what is in the heart differs in the wordings of the Predecessors. Some of them express it as 'cognizance', while some of them as 'belief' and some of them as 'attestation'. All of them, in their expressions, are far from the terminology of the [theological] rhetorician, for according to them, nothing is intended by cognizance except the correct belief, like al-Ajurrî's statement in his book,

[...] that that which the scholars of the Muslims are upon is that faith is obligatory upon all of the creation, i.e., attestation with the heart, confirmation with the tongue, and deed with the limbs.

Then know that cognizance with the heart and attestation are not content except that faith with the tongue in utterance is with it. Cognizance with the heart and utterance with the tongue are not content until there is a deed with the limbs. Thus, if these three traits were perfected in him, he would be a believer.<sup>7</sup>

He constantly repeats cognizance and attestation and does not mention the deed of the heart. What he intends from cognizance and attestation is known from his book, however, and likewise, attestation, i.e., [what is] embodied by compliance and following. They did not mean what the [theological] rhetorician means by mere attestation, just as its account preceded from Sa'îd bin Jubair in his reply to 'Abdil-Malik bin Marwân: "You asked about attestation and attestation is that the servant does what he attested to from the Qur'an."<sup>8</sup>

Thus, it should not be easy to swallow for anyone that he wears himself out in excusing whoever expressed cognizance with that he intends such or such. Rather, [what is] intended by cognizance in the customary [usage] of the people of knowledge from the Salafis is the faith-

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<sup>7</sup> *ash-Shari'ah*, vol. 2, pg. 611.

<sup>8</sup> [As] preceded on pg. 242 [of *Sharh Alfâdh*]. [t] Cited from a long quote taken from Ibn Taimiyyah's *al-Fatâwâ*, pgs. 293-294 with slight adaptation.

related cognizance deemed necessary by the attestation and the heart-related compliance. The imams expressed it according to its simple meaning, which whoever has familiarity of the Predecessors' wording without [any] consideration for rhetorical terminological shackles will recognize. Just as 'Allâmah Ibn al-Qayyim said,

Cognizance of Allah, glorified is He, is two types: cognizance of confirmation, and it is [the one] that the people subscribe to; the reverent, the insolent, the obedient and the disobedient; and the second, a cognizance [that] obligates shyness from Him, love for Him, the heart's attachment to Him, longing for meeting Him, dreading Him, turning [repentantly] to Him, liking His company, and fleeing from the creation to Him; this is the exclusive cognizance.<sup>9</sup>

Starting over again, then surely although the expression of the stipulation was from the terminology of the latter [ones] from the Murji'ah, if it was applied by a Salafî in the matter of faith, however, then it is taken according to its linguistic meaning.

➤ [It] remains that it is said, “So is the deed a condition of perfection, regardless of whether with its more general meaning or its more specific meaning?”

The answer then—after we know that when the Murji'ah negated the deed's inclusion in faith, they intend the heart and the limbs' deed—is that the perfection is two types: obligatory perfection and desirable perfection.

As for the deeds, i.e., the deeds of the limbs, let alone the heart, [being] a condition for the desirable perfection, then this is from the statement of the Murji'ah—rather, it is from the vilest of their statements. Shaikh of Islam ? refuted this in what was transmitted previously. He clarified that the texts had negated faith from [the one] who left some of the deeds and that the negation is not for the leaving of a desirable [act]. He ? said,

[...] and likewise, the rest of the ḥadīths in which the deeds of reverence are made [to be] from faith. Then if faith was negated with their absence, it indicates that they are an obligation, while if the virtue of their companion's faith was mentioned and his faith was not negated, it indicates that they are a desirable [act], for surely, Allah and His messenger do not negate the name of an affair's designation—which Allah and His messenger commanded—except if some of its obligatory [acts] are left, like his saying, «There is no prayer except with the mother of the Qur'an,»<sup>10</sup> his statement, «There is no faith for whoever has no integrity<sup>11</sup> and there is no religion for whoever

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<sup>9</sup> *al-Fawâ'id* by Ibn al-Qayyim, pg. 301.

<sup>10</sup> [As] preceded on pg. 149 [of *Sharḥ Alfâdh*]. [t] Published by Muslim in [the Book of] the Prayer (no. 394 [of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*]) from 'Ubâdah t .

<sup>11</sup> [t] Ar. amânah – reliability, trustworthiness; loyalty, faithfulness, fidelity; integrity, honesty; something deposited in trust; a deposit, trust, charge.

does not have a covenant,»<sup>12</sup> and similar to that. So as for if the deed was a desirable [act] in worship, he would not negate it<sup>13</sup> for the lack of the desirable [act], for surely, if this were possible, it would certainly be possible that the name of *faith*, prayer, zakâh, and Ḥajj would be negated from the general mass of believers, because there is not a deed except that others are more virtuous than it. No one performs the actions of reverence similar to what the Prophet ﷺ performed—rather, not [even] Abū Bakr or 'Umar [did]. Thus, if their negation from [one] who did not come with their desirable perfection is possible, that it is negated from the general mass of Muslims, from the former [ones] and the latter [ones], would certainly be possible; and a sensible [person] does not say this.

Thus, whoever said the negated [thing] is surely the perfection, then if he meant that it is the negation of **the obligatory perfection** whose abandoner is blamed and is exposed to the penalty, then he has spoken the truth. And if he meant that it is the negation of **the desirable perfection**, then this did not occur at all in the words of Allah and His messenger. It is not possible to occur, for surely, whoever performed the obligation as it was obligated on him and did not diminish anything from its obligation, it is not possible that it is said he did not perform it, not factually nor figuratively. So when he told the Bedouin [who did] poorly in his prayer, «Return. Then pray, for surely you did not pray,»<sup>14</sup> and he told [the one] who prayed behind the row and had commanded him with the repetition, «There is no prayer for the [person praying] alone behind the row,»<sup>15</sup> it was for the leaving of an obligation.

Like that, His statement, exalted is He, (Certainly the believers are those who believed in Allah and His messenger, then did not have misgivings, and endeavoured with their wealth and their selves in Allah's path; Those, they are the truthful [ones]) (49:15) clarifies that jihad is an obligation and leaving the misgiving is an obligation. And although jihad is a [religious] duty according to the sufficiency, all of the believers are initially addressed with it, so upon all of them is the belief of its obligation and the determination to perform it when required. Due to this, the Prophet ﷺ said, «Whoever died and did not [partake in] an incursion nor talked

<sup>12</sup> [As] preceded on pg. 142 [of *Sharḥ Alfâdh*]. [t] Published by Aḥmad (nos. 11975, 12157, 12787, and 13225) and Ibn Ḥibbân (no. 195) from Anas ṭ ; authenticated by Shaikh al-Albânî ? in *Ṣaḥîḥ al-Jâmi'* (no. 7179).

<sup>13</sup> [t] I.e., faith.

<sup>14</sup> [As] preceded on pg. 150 [of *Sharḥ Alfâdh*]. [t] Published by al-Bukhârî in [the Book of] the Call [to Prayer] (no. 757 [of his *Ṣaḥîḥ*]) and Muslim in [the Book of] the Prayer (no. 398 [of his *Ṣaḥîḥ*]) from Abî Hurairah ṭ .

<sup>15</sup> I did not find it with this wording. The ḥadîth of the one who prayed behind the row was published by at-Tirmidhî in [the Book of] the Prayer (no. 230 [of his *Ṣaḥîḥ*]), Abū Dâwud in [the Book of] the Prayer (no. 682 [of his *Sunan*]), Ibn Mâjah in [the Book of] the Performance of the Prayer (no. 1003 [of his *Sunan*]), and Aḥmad (nos. 15862 and 17535).

[himself] into [partaking in] an incursion, died upon a branch of hypocrisy,» narrated by Muslim.<sup>16</sup>

Like that is His statement, (Certainly, the believers are those whose hearts cower when Allah is mentioned, are increased in faith when His verses are recited to them, and rely upon their Lord; ! those who perform the prayer and spend from what We provide them. ! Those, they are the believers in truth. For them are degrees, forgiveness, and noble provision with their Lord) (8:2-4). All of this is an obligation. So surely, reliance on Allah is an obligation from the greatest of obligated [acts], just as sincerity to Allah is an obligation and love of Allah and His messenger is an obligation.<sup>17</sup>

With that, you will recognize that applying the saying 'condition of the perfection' to deeds of the limbs, the Murji'ah apply it intending by that that the deed is not from faith; and this is false.<sup>18</sup> Some of the People of the Sunnah apply it meaning by that that the deed—the deed of the limbs—is not included in faith's root even though it is from the sum of faith and included in its legal reality. By that, they mean that its loss diminishes faith and it does not cease in totality because of it. **This meaning is extremely correct and the transmitted [understanding] from the Predecessors, if the intended [meaning] of perfection is the obligatory perfection.** Due to this, Shaikh of Islam ? laid down that if this meaning was agreed upon, then the dispute after that, regarding the deed's inclusion in faith, because of its<sup>19</sup> absence, is an expressive dispute. He ? said,

The intended [thing] here is that the extolement is not established except for a faith along with which is the deed, not for a faith devoid of a deed. So if it is recognized that the blame and the penalty occur for the leaving of the deed, **after that, there is no use to their dispute. Rather,** although they are mistaken in the wording, opposers to the Book and the Sunnah, **it is an expressive dispute;** and if they said the leaving of the deed surely does not harm him, then this is explicit disbelief.<sup>20</sup>

He also said,

From what should be recognized is that much of the controversy between the People of the Sunnah in this issue is an expressive dispute. Otherwise, the proponents [that say] faith is a statement from the jurists agree with all of the scholars of the Sunnah that the companions of the sins are included under the blame and the threat. Even if

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<sup>16</sup> [As] preceded on pg. 151 [of *Sharḥ Alfâdh*]. [t] In [the Book of] the Emirate (no. 1910 [of his *Ṣaḥîḥ*]) from Abî Hurairah † .

<sup>17</sup> *al-Fatâwâ*, vol. 7, pg. 14-16.

<sup>18</sup> Along with noting what we presented: that the [theological] rhetoricians apply the wording 'the deed' or 'the deeds' to the deeds of the hearts and the limbs.

<sup>19</sup> [t] I.e., faith's.

<sup>20</sup> *al-Fatâwâ*, vol. 7, pg. 181.

they said their faith is surely like Jibril's faith, then they say the companion of faith without the enjoined deed along with performance of the forbidden [acts] is surely deserving of the blame and the penalty, **just as the Congregation says**. They also say that from the people of the greater sins are [those] who will enter the Fire, **just as the Congregation says**, while those who negate the name 'faith' from the sinner from the People of the Sunnah agree that he does not reside in the Fire. **So between the jurists of the religion, there is no dispute regarding the companions of the sins if they confirmed, inwardly and outwardly, what the Messenger came with.**<sup>21</sup>

Much of what brings about the difference because of applying the stipulation to the deed of the limbs is the similarity of this to the Murji'ah's words, for indeed, when some of the notables saw that the Murji'ah say the deeds are surely a condition of perfection with the meaning that its abandoner does not disbelieve, they assumed that this was the crux of their statements, and this is a error. Rather, this came from a number of the imams of the Sunnah. The words of the Predecessors differs from the words of the Murji'ah in basis and in meaning. As for the basis, then the Murji'ah lay down that the deeds are not included in faith's reality. Thus, their usage of the word 'condition' is an expression of this belief, contrary to the Predecessors. As for the meaning, then surely, by the 'condition', the Murji'ah mean what is external from the reality of the [thing it is] stipulated for, contrary to the Salafis, for their intent is the condition with its linguistic meaning, i.e., the general necessity.

Due to this, the determination that the deeds are from faith's perfection or its branch came; and we had presented a suitable tract from the Predecessors' statements in the first section, so look to it there.

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<sup>21</sup> *al-Fatâwâ*, vol 7, pgs. 296-297.