



A Discussion about Harshness amongst the Salafees

Imaam Muhammad Naasirud-Deen al-Albaanee (d.1420H)

Translation by Abul-Hasan Maalik Ibn Aadam¹

Version 1.0

Questioner: O noble Shaykh! There is a question about the topic of *da'wah*, it says: gentleness, leniency, and tolerance are from the well established *sunan* (traditions) from the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), so is the implementation of gentleness in *da'wah* obligatory or supererogatory?

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Obligatory.

Questioner: There is a reason for the question.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Of course, there is something up the sleeve.

Questioner: The *Salafees* with their different types are known - and it could be correct - for harshness and lack gentleness in the spread of the *da'wah*. So do you see this to be the case - this is what I see - what is your opinion?

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Firstly, there is an observation to be made in your statement, '...and it could be correct.'

Questioner: I asked: Do you see this to be the case?

Shaykh al-Albaanee: First, you said, '...and it could be true.'

Questioner: Pardon me.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: You said this?

¹ The following discussion was taken from the series of recordings entitled, *SilsilatulHudaa wan-Noor* of al-Albaanee (cassette no. 595).

Questioner: Yes, pardon me.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: So there is an observation to be made. When our brothers make such statements, we get their attention and say, ‘this is the speech of politicians,’ and they may not intend it but [it’s like these lines]: Indeed speech begins in the heart - and the tongue has been made a proof for what is in the chest.

So when someone says about something, ‘It may be like this,’ it could be countered, ‘it may not be like that,’ so two matters appear in your question, and afterwards we will continue with the answer. Are you certain about that which is said, meaning the *Salafees* lack gentleness, and use harshness in their methodology? You opened the door for me to ask this question because of your statement, ‘...it could be true!’

Questioner: O Shaykh! I asked you to pardon me for saying, ‘...it could be’.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Like this?

Questioner: Yes.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: In that case, let us hear the correct statement. What is it?

Questioner: Should I repeat it (the question)?

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Do not repeat it, because it is an error, and if not, then why did you asked to be pardoned, repeat it correctly without ‘could be,’ is this clear?

Questioner: Yes.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Go ahead.

Questioner: The question from the beginning.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: No problem, it’s your choice.

Questioner: We asked—and you answered—that leniency and gentleness is obligatory in *da’wah*, and what the *Salafees* have become known for—from what I see—is harshness and a lack of gentleness; this is my opinion.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Are you one of them?

Questioner: I hope so.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: You hope so; you’re one of them, meaning you’re *Salafee*?

Questioner: Yes.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: So, are you from those *Salafees* who are harsh?

Questioner: I do not praise myself, I only intended [to ask about] a distinct characteristic of theirs.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: The issue at hand is not a matter of praise, it is a matter of clarification, and as you have said, you asked this question for the purpose of giving advice. So when I asked are you from those who are harsh, it is not a matter of self-praise because you intend to clarify the reality, meaning, if you asked me the same question, I would say to you that I do not see of myself to be harsh, but this does not mean that I am praising myself, because I am only stating a fact, so think about the question.

Questioner: Yes, O Shaykh, my answer is the same as yours.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Then it is not correct that we make a blanket statement that the *Salafees* are harsh. What is correct is that we say, 'Some of them have harshness.' Is it clear so far?

Questioner: Yes.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: So, we say that some of the *Salafees* have a manner that is harsh, but is it seen that this characteristic is specific only to the *Salafees*?

Questioner: No.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: So therefore what is the benefit and the significance of this kind of question?! Secondly, is this leniency that we spoke about as being obligatory, mandatory under all circumstances?

Questioner: Of course not.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: So therefore, we arrive at the following outcome: it is not permissible for you or other than you to describe an entire group of people with a general description, applying it to all of them. Secondly, it is not permissible to generalize this characteristic upon any individual from the Muslims, whether he is *Salafee* or *khalafee*, except in certain circumstances, as long as we agree that leniency is not legislated at all times. So we see that the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) used the type of harshness that if a *Salafee* today used it the people would strongly reject this from him. For example: Perhaps you know the story of Abis-Sanaabil, do you remember this story?

Questioner: No.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: A woman's husband died while she was pregnant. So when she gave birth it reached her that the Prophet said that when a pregnant woman's husband dies, her waiting period is until she delivers her baby, and this is found in the *Saheeh* of Imaam al-Bukhaaree (d.256H). So after she gave birth, she anticipated becoming engaged for marriage, so she beautified herself and put on *kuhl* (antimony). So when Abus-Sanaabil saw her, he proposed marriage, but she refused, so he said to her, "It is not permissible for you to marry until you have finished the waiting period for mourning - which is four months and ten days." And from what is apparent, she was a woman² who had concern for her Religion, so she dressed in her over-garment and rushed to the Prophet. She mentioned what Abus-Sanaabil said to her, and the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Abus-Sanaabil has lied."³ Is this considered harshness or not?

Questioner: Yes, this is harshness.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: From whom? This was from the most merciful of the people. [Allaah says,]

"If you had been hard-hearted and harsh they would have dispersed from around you." [Soorah Aali-'Imraan 3:159]

So therefore using leniency as a starting point is not a general rule, as we previously agreed upon. Rather, it is upon the Muslim to use leniency at the proper time and harshness at the proper time. Also, for example, there is what appears in the *Musnad* of Imaam Ahmad (d.241H) when the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) gave an exhortation, one of the Companions stood up and said, 'What Allaah wills and you will, O Messenger of Allaah.' The Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Are you making me an equal to Allaah?! Say whatever Allaah wills alone."⁴ Is this harshness or not?

Questioner: This is the simply Prophet's manner of speaking.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: I call [what you are doing now] a diversion, because you did not answer me [this time] as you answered me before. When I informed you what the Prophet said about Abus-Sanaabil, "Abus-Sanaabil has lied." Is this harshness or not?

Questioner: Yes, that is harshness.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: And the second *hadeeth*?

² Her name was Subay'ah bintul-Haarith (*radiyallaahu 'anhaa*).

³ The foundation of this narration is found in the *Saheeh* (no. 3770) of al-Bukhaaree and Muslim in his *Saheeh* (no. 56). As for the narration containing the wording, 'Abus-Sanaabil has lied,' it is collected by al-Albaanee in *SilsilatusSaheehah* (no. 3274) upon the authority of 'Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood (*radiyallaahu 'anhu*).

⁴ Related by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (1/214, 224, 283, and 347) upon the authority of Ibn 'Abbaas. It was authenticated by al-Albaanee in *SilsilatusSaheehah* (no. 139).

Questioner: He only clarified for him by saying, “Are you making me an equal to Allaah?”

Shaykh al-Albaanee: This is a diversion - may Allaah bless you - I did not ask you whether he clarified or not, I asked you did he use harshness or leniency? Why has your manner of answering changed? The first time you did not say he made a clarification by saying, “Abus-Sanaabil has lied.” He did clarify, but was his clarification with leniency or harshness?

Questioner: In the second question, he didn't call him a liar; he merely said, “Are you making me equal to Allaah?!”

Shaykh al-Albaanee: *Allaahu Akbar!* This is from the harshest of censures - may Allaah bless you.

One of the attendees: O Shaykh, [the Prophet] said, “How miserable a preacher you are,” from the narration related by Muslim.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Yes, this is another instance, do you remember the narration? Whoever obeys Allaah and His Messenger is guided and whoever disobeys them is misguided, he said, “How miserable a preacher you are.”⁵ Is this harshness or leniency?

Questioner: Yes, this is harshness.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: What is important - may Allaah bless you - is that there are times to use leniency and there are times to use harshness. Now after we have agreed that there is no general rule that we straightaway use leniency, leniency, leniency; or straightaway harshness, harshness, harshness.

Questioner: Yes.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Therefore sometimes we use this, and sometimes we use that. So now when the *Salafees* in general are accused of being harsh do you not see that the *Salafees* in relation to the other groups and parties are concerned with knowledge of the Islamic legislation and calling the people to it more than others?

Questioner: No question.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: No doubt - may Allaah bless you - so because of this concern, which is greater than others, others consider [simply] enjoining the good and forbidding the evil -

⁵ Related by Muslim in his *Saheeh* (no. 2007) upon the authority of 'Adiyy Ibn Haatim (*radiyallaahu 'anhu*) who related that a man gave an exhortation in the presence of the Messenger of Allaah and said, “Whoever obeys Allaah and his Messenger has been guided, and whoever disobeys them has deviated.” The Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “How miserable a preacher you are. Say, whoever disobeys Allaah and His Messenger.”

even if it is coupled with leniency - as harshness. Rather, some of them say these are not the times for it (enjoining the good and forbidding the evil); rather some of them go to the extreme and say that studying *Tawheed* divides the ranks of the Muslims. So therefore - may Allaah bless you - what I hope to arrive at is that this matter is relative, meaning that a person is not fanatical and especially when entering into the subsidiary matters, which some of them call trivialities, so they consider a discussion that is coupled with good mannerisms as harshness. And you as a *Salafee*, like us, should not spread this amongst the people saying that the *Salafees* are harsh.

Because we have agreed that some of them are harsh, and even the companions were not free from this. From them were those who were lenient and from them were those who were harsh. And perhaps you know the story of the Bedouin who began to urinate in the mosque, what did the Companions intend to do to him? They intended to beat him, is this leniency or harshness?

Questioner: This is harshness.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: Harshness, but what did the Messenger say to them? "Leave him." So therefore, there are very few people who are able to avoid using harshness. But the truth of the matter is that the fundamental principle is that *da'wah* is based upon wisdom and good exhortation, and wisdom is to use leniency at its proper time and harshness at its proper time. So therefore, it is not possible for the people, except few, to avoid using harshness, but the truth is that the fundamental principle of *da'wah* is that it be called to with wisdom and good exhortation, and from wisdom is using leniency in its proper place and using harshness in its proper place.

So if we describe the best of the Islaamic groups, which has superiority over the other groups in diligently following the Book and the *Sunnah* and what the pious predecessors were upon, with harshness unrestrictedly, I do not believe this is from justice whatsoever, but as for it being said that there are those from amongst them [who have harshness] then who can deny this? So as long as the companions had those from amongst them who used harshness out of its place, then those *khalafees* who came after them from the likes of us—*khalafee* in the linguistic sense—would have this harshness for all the more reason. So now let's discuss such and such a person who you say is gentle and lenient, will he be able to always avoid using harshness out of its place?

Questioner: Of course not.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: "So, therefore—may Allaah bless you—the matter is settled. And since it is like that, it is only upon us to advise one another when we see someone calling the people and advising them with harshness that is misplaced, we bring this to his attention, because it may be that he has [a different] point of view. So if he accepts this then may Allaah reward him with good, and if he has a different point of view, we hear him out and the matter will be settled.

Questioner: O Shaykh, many of the *Salafees* use harshness and do not use gentleness, they use harshness at the proper time, and they do not use gentleness at the proper time, and they are not few in number—we say that all of the groups act in this manner—but they are not few in number, and in my question I did not compare the *Salafees* to other groups; I am not concerned with the affairs of other groups; I am concerned with the affair of the *Salafees*. Many of the *Salafees* hinder people from the *Salafee* methodology with an adversarial manner toward the people, and these individuals are not few in number. I intended in the question that was recorded by the brother Muhammad for you to give some advice to those who have been tested with harshness and mean-spiritedness, this was my intention in presenting the question.

Shaykh al-Albaanee: May Allaah bless you, giving of advice is not in need of the likes of me since the *Salafees*, and other than the *Salafees*, know the *aayah* that we mentioned earlier,

“Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good exhortation and argue with them in a way that is better.” [Sooratu-Nahl 16:125]

And more than anyone, they read the narration of 'Aa'ishah (*radiyallaahu 'anhaa*) the Jew sent salutations to the Prophet twisting his tongue saying, 'Death be upon you,' so when she heard this twisted salutation she shuddered behind the *hijab* (curtain) until she almost tore it in two, as has come in the narration where she responded in anger, "And upon you be death, and the curse of Allaah and His anger. O brothers of the apes and pigs!" As for the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), he did not exceed beyond his response to him, "And unto you the same." So when the Jew departed the Prophet censured her saying, "O 'Aa'ishah, indeed gentleness is not placed into something except that it beautifies it, and it is not removed from something except that it disfigures it." She replied, "O Messenger of Allaah, did you not hear what he said?" He responded, 'Did you not hear what I said?'"⁶ So therefore, 'Aa'ishah, who was reared from childhood in the house Prophecy and Revelation still was not able to avoid using harshness in place of gentleness, so what can we say about other than her from the *Salafees* - as you say - and they were not raised in the house of Prophecy and Revelation? Rather, I say a word that may or may not have reached your ears at some point from some of my recordings. Indeed, the calamity of the Islaamic world today is equivalent to what is called the Islaamic awakening, that this awakening is not connected to an Islaamic cultivation; there is no Islaamic cultivation presently.

Therefore, I believe that the effect of this Islaamic awakening will only be accomplished after a period of time when the effects of cultivation have become apparent in the present generation.

Therefore, from an intellectual perspective, you will not find one who would argue or differ with you that the foundation of the Islaamic call is gentleness and good exhortation,

⁶ Related by al-Bukhaaree in his *Saheeh* (no. 5570) from the *hadeeth* of 'Aa'ishah (*radiyallaahu 'anhaa*).

but what is important is the practical application, and this application is in need of a guide, an educator to teach under him tens of students of knowledge, and those students then go out from this educator to teach others, and in this way the Islamic cultivation will spread little by little. And there is no doubt that the matter is as Allaah has said,

“But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion [of good].” [Soorah Fussilat 41:35]

And we ask Allaah to make us a middle course nation without excessiveness or negligence.

Questioner: May Allaah reward you with good, O Shaykh.

One of the attendees: O Shaykh, sometimes when a *Sunnee* encounters someone from the people of innovation, he (the innovator) is haughty and arrogant, as Allaah commanded Moosaa (*'alayhissalaam*) to use leniency with Fir'awn and with that he still said to him,

“And I think you are, indeed, O Fir'awn, doomed to destruction.”
[Sooratul-Israa' 17:102]

O Shaykh, when we were in the college, the professors used to mock us when we said to them, 'The Messenger of Allaah said...' So if a person loses his self control and uses harshness, it should not even be considered harshness in this instance, and I am delighted by something I heard from you, O Shaykh: The wall said to the peg, 'Why are you splitting me?' It responded, 'Ask the one who is hammering me.'

Shaykh al-Albaanee: This is correct. At any rate, we ask Allaah to give us wisdom, and it is to put everything in its proper place.

One of the attendees: O Shaykh, in *AhkaamulJanaa'iz* there is the statement of Ibn Mas'ood when a person said, 'Seek Allaah's forgiveness for your brother.' And he responded, "May Allaah not forgive him."

Shaykh al-Albaanee: With this are many examples, the brother Aboo 'Abdullaah reminded me of a narration, that one of the Companions, perhaps it is 'Abdullaah Ibn Mas'ood or 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Umar.

One of the attendees: It was 'Umar himself.

Shaykh al-Albaanee 'Umar?

One of the attendees: 'Umar, when a person said to him, 'Seek Allaah's forgiveness for your brother.' And he responded, "May Allaah not forgive him."

Shaykh al-Albaanee: What is your opinion of this? No doubt if you heard me use these words you would be the first person to say, 'The Shaykh is too harsh.' But here there has arisen earnest concern for the Islaamic legislation in the one who is making the correction which has caused him to use harsh speech, another may be at ease and not find himself feeling this same jealousy that caused the first to use this [harsh] speech. Also, from what is apparent to me from the reasons of the spread of this accusation against the *Salafees*, you know that whenever a person speaks a great deal, he will naturally make more errors. And those who speak about the Islaamic legislation are the *Salafees*, so inevitably they will make mistakes in proportion to their speech, while if this harshness was compared to what they have brought from advice with justice, fairness, and leniency, we would find similar to what we have mentioned about some of the *Salaf*, even in the presence of the Messenger of Allaah, but this [use of] harshness does not permit us to attribute those Companions who used sternness in certain instances with being harsh people, rather we can only say that perhaps you, or I, or others will sometimes fall into something of harshness.

[End of dialogue]