

The Fitnah of the Khawārij

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Introduction	2
The Causes & Origins of the Fitnah	3
1. Ignorance	4
2. Following Unclear Evidences and Leaving the Clear Ones	6
3. Misinterpretations.....	9
4. The Love of Worldly Life & Leadership.....	9
5. Extremism	10
6. Opposing the Scholars & Not Referring Back to Them	11
Examples of the Fitnah	13
The Solution	21
A Muslim's Position	23

¹ This lecture was given by Ṣāliḥ Āli-Shaykh, the minister of Islamic Affairs in Saudi Arabia, as part of a conference. The lecture was then transcribed by a brother named Sālim al-Jazā'irī. [Translator's Note]

Introduction

In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the bestower of all mercy. All praise and thanks are for Allah, the Lord of all creations. And may peace and prayers be on our prophet, Muhammad, and on his family and companions.²

I have divided the topics I will speak about into four sections:

1. I will mention the causes and origins of فِتْنٍ “Fitan” (pl.) (sing. فِتْنَةٌ) or tribulations and afflictions, because knowing the causes means knowing their effects and knowing the origins means knowing their consequences.
2. A glimpse at some examples of these tribulations that have occurred in this nation.
3. A brief look at the solution.
4. And a Muslim’s position whenever these tribulations occur in light of the Book (the Quran), the Sunnah, and the principles of the Islamic legislation.

² A few paragraphs of Ṣāliḥ Āli-Shaykh’s introduction were omitted. These were simply introductory words of recognition and gratitude to the those who arranged the lectures. [T. N.]

The Causes & Origins of the Fitnah

The Arabic word فِتْنٍ “Fitān” is the plural form of فِتْنَةٌ “Fitnah” and Fitnah, like many other words, can be used in two senses: a linguistic sense, and the noble Shaykh³ has already explained this, mentioning usages of this term linguistically from the Book and Sunnah.

The other sense of the term is the formal Islamic usage that most people know and use, and it is that Fitnah refers to anything that harms or afflicts people or disunites them like murder or the absence of safety and security.

You can also understand the word Fitnah in terms of how people frequently use it in that it is any statement or action that opposes Islamic legislation and leads to a loss of safety and security, or to disorder and chaos within society, or causes division.

And it is these meanings that are intended by warning against tribulations (Fitān) whether public or hidden. It is to be cautious of all actions and statements not found within the framework of the Islamic legislation – those that result in a loss of safety, division and disunity between groups, and that result in people dividing into separate sects.

This is the meaning of tribulations found throughout Islamic history. Some researchers even say that Islamic history is full of tribulations. Rather some go so far as to ask: Is there in the history of Muslims anything but tribulations?! Do we read in history books anything but fighting? Can we find in these history books anything other than bloodshed?!

And this is correct from one perspective and wrong from another.

It is true; you find throughout history what they have mentioned: lots of fighting, people opposing the governments and authorities, bloodshed, and people considering others' blood, wealth, and honor lawful to violate.

³ Ṣāliḥ Āli-Shaykh is referring to a scholar participating in the same lecture series who spoke on a similar topic before him. [T.N.]

However, there is an important point about historians that we should keep in mind and all Muslims should remember. It is that historians constantly point out bad or unusual occurrences that have happened throughout history. Rarely do they mention the good things and contributions made by leaders or the Islamic nations. So every year, you find them talking about all the things that happened that year of fighting, tribulations, and similar incidences that took place. Very rarely do you find them mentioning anything praiseworthy that happened in the past year. So, the negative historical perspective alone shouldn't be the only one we see when considering history.

Still, tribulations are there. And we will touch on some examples as long as time permits.

Tribulations definitely have origins and causes. Again, we are talking about tribulations (Fitnah) with the meaning we have spoken about: tribulations that result in disunity, that divide societies, that result in leaving the realm of Islamic legislation, the loss of safety, social unrest, and transgressions committed against people – against their lives and honor. These things certainly have origins.

The cause of these things is always some group of people who want to destabilize security and divide people into separate, opposing factions. And most of the time, what leads such a group to cause these afflictions, to oppose governments and authorities, to murder people, and to shed blood is nothing more than religious extremism and increased enthusiasm to do something seemingly religiously-based.

About this, we will mention some specific origins and reasons:

1. Ignorance

The first reason that tribulations begin to appear is ignorance – being ignorant of the religion, ignorant of the principles of Islamic law, or ignorant of people's rights. This eventually leads to problems among people. Anyone who has a false sense of religious eagerness or fervor that's undisciplined, he will begin to act upon ignorance that could

lead to engaging in such tribulations. And this very thing all began with the man who told the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) after he distributed some wealth among people, “Be fair, Muhammad!” The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) looked angrily at him and said:

وَيْلَكَ مَنْ يَعْدِلُ إِذَا لَمْ أَعْدِلْ؟

“Beware. Who would be fair if not me?”

He then said:

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ ضَيْضِي هَذَا أَقْوَامٌ يَحْفِرُ أَحَدُكُمْ صَلَاتَهُ مَعَ صَلَاتِهِمْ وَصِيَامَهُ مَعَ
صِيَامِهِمْ

“There will appear from this man’s progeny people who one of you would belittle his own prayer when compared with theirs, and his fasting compared to theirs.”

In other words, they will be seemingly religious people who pray and fast.

يَمْرُقُونَ مِنَ الدِّينِ كَمَا يَمْرُقُ السَّهْمُ مِنَ الرَّمِيَّةِ

“(But) they will pass through the religion just as an arrow might pass through a target.”⁴

And those people have indeed appeared.

Remaining ignorant, unaware of the right of the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), unaware of the correct religious knowledge or of the religion at all is destructive. For this, no one begins opposing the leaderships or leaves civil obedience even a little except that you find him ignorant. Rather, it is his ignorance that leads him to such things. The famous scholar, Ibn al-Qayyim, said it well when he wrote in a famous poem:

والجهل داء قاتل وشفأؤه
أمران في التركيب متفقان

⁴ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 3610, 6163, 6933) and Muslim (no. 1064).

نص من القرآن أو من سنة وطبيب ذاك العالم الرباني

Ignorance is a destructive sickness.

Its medicine – two things in harmonious order.

A text from the Quran or from the Sunnah.

Its doctor – a devout, trustworthy scholar.

So, if the Book and Sunnah is the remedy then its application and understanding should come from a sincere and trustworthy scholar, not from just any person.

2. Following Unclear Evidences and Leaving the Clear Ones

The second reason tribulations occur and the appearance of people who cause them – those who pass through the religion (the Khawārij) – is following unclear, controversial, or disputable “Mutashābih” proofs while forgetting about the clear-cut “Muḥkam” proofs. Allah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) has placed within His Book these clear proofs as well as some not as clear, and it’s the latter ones that people have been tested with.

The Muḥkam evidences are those that are clear-cut, they being obvious to understand their meanings.

The Mutashābih evidences, however, are some texts that their meanings might not be entirely clear. It’s the well-studied scholars who understand them; not everyone may comprehend them.

Allah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) says:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخْرُ
مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ﴾

It is He who has sent down to you the Book. In it are verses clear and precise – they are the foundation of the book. And others are unspecific (verses).

[Sūrah Āli-'Imrān, 3:7]

In it are some verses that are simple, clear, and obvious in meaning, and other verses are not as specifically clear. He then says:

﴿ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ

تَأْوِيلِهِ ﴾

As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they follow what is unspecific, unclear to them, seeking (to cause) Fitnah and seeking an interpretation (suitable to them).

[Sūrah Āli-'Imrān, 3:7]

I will stop here just to clarify two points:

The first point is the Quran being divided into clear Muḥkam verses and unspecific Mutashābih verses or those that may not be entirely clear to everyone. So, these unspecific, potentially unclear verses are there. That means that it is very possible that a Muslim might use the Quran in an attempt to support something completely wrong. Some scholars of Islam say that it is not a matter of simply coming up with a proof, simply finding an “Allah said” or “The messenger said” type of evidence. The point is that your usage of that evidence is correct – that it actually supports what you are trying to prove and it is according to the understanding of the Salaf. The point is not that you simply bring some proof; the proof could be obvious and clear or it could possibly be unspecific and unclear. The point is that your usage of that proof must be correct.

Today, everyone talks using the Book and Sunnah. No one really comes without it, not even those people who pass through the religion (the Khawārij) – the misguided ones who make light of their actions when they commit their crimes of bombings, tribulations, murdering Muslims and Non-Muslims, and the rest of the crimes and problems they cause. All of these people bring some sort of proof. Is then the case decided once they present some proof? No, the proof must first be obvious and clear, and the usage of such

proof has to be correct in that it actually supports what's being proven. And the understanding of such proof must be according to the way the Salaf of the nation understood it.

Similarly, just as the Quran has some verses clear and others not entirely specific and clear, the Sunnah, the prophet's speech (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), also contains some Ḥadīth that are plain and clear and others not so clear to everyone. So, how do we know the unclear ones? How do the scholars know the about the unclear ones? The Ḥadīth that may not be clear are then compared with and referred back to the ones that are obvious and unmistakably clear; they are understood in context with the clear ones.

The second point I want to clarify about the verse is regarding the statement, **“As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they follow what is unspecific, unclear to them.”** Allah affirms here that it is possible for people to have deviation in their hearts. He first mentions, **“As for those in whose hearts is deviation,”** (before mentioning that they follow the unclear verses) meaning that the presence of these unspecific, unclear verses is not the cause of their deviation. Rather, they already had a form of deviation within themselves, so they chose to follow only these unspecific verses. This happens often; someone with personal desires and misguidance searches for anything to use as proof to support his preconceived notions and what he's already decided on. Ibn Ḥazm mentioned at the beginning of his book, “al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-aḥkām” that one of the reasons people deviate from the truth is that they often have preconceived ideas they have already decided to follow, so they look for evidence to support the direction they have chosen to take. This is one of the main reasons that leads to tribulations occurring, divisions among people, and misguidance.

So, beware of having preconceived personal preferences in something and then afterwards you look to the evidences. Then you look in the Book for something to support and back what you have already decided on, what you already began to do, or perhaps to support the direction your group is taking, or for similar reasons. We warn against this.

Within the Sunnah there are also clear and obvious texts as well as some not as clear. Likewise are the scholars' statements and positions. Is every single statement of the companions or scholars, or their actions and positions always entirely clear? It's not that way; some are clear and some may not be.

If someone comes and says, "Imam al-Shāfi'ī says this and that," "Imam Ibn Taymiyyah says this and that," or "Imam Mālik says this and that" – is the matter now finished and their statements automatically correct? No, even the scholar's statements must first be explicitly clear, and second, if they are not specific or the meaning is not obvious, then they must be referred back to clearer statements or positions. If then the issue still is not clear, then understanding the statements of the people of knowledge must be referred back to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

3. Misinterpretations

Is this life corrupted by anything but misinterpretations? Issues are constantly misinterpreted, distorted to mean something other than they actually mean just fit whatever the person wants them to mean. It is such misinterpretations that harm people whether they be twisting the meanings in issues of creedal beliefs or in practice like what some sects do such as the Mu'tazilah, the Khawārij, and others.

4. The Love of Worldly Life & Leadership

The famous scholar Ibn Taymiyyah said that this reason led to the appearance of the Khawārij. When did they begin to appear? They started to appear (as a group) during the time of 'Uthmān (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) (the third caliph of Islam). And was there anyone better than 'Uthmān during that time? Was there even a better nation at that time than that of 'Uthmān's? Still they (the Khawārij) hated him, opposed him, and eventually murdered him; they killed the one who first published and circulated the copy of the Quran while he was in his own home, reading the Quran and while he was fasting (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ). Ibn Taymiyyah, said that anyone, whether from the Khawārij or not, that leaves the obedience and allegiance to the legitimate leader (government, president, authority, etc.),

it is only an inner love for worldly affairs and leadership that leads him to that. He then uses some religious issues or even his enthusiasm for imposing Islamic law and uses that as an excuse to fulfill his inner desires. And these words (of Ibn Taymiyyah) are clear and correct to anyone who reflects on them.

5. Extremism

Another cause of these tribulations is extremism – going beyond the set bounds in anything. Allah (جَلُّ وَعَلَا) has forbidden this nation from going to extremes just as He did with the People of the Book:

﴿ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ ﴾

Oh people of the book, do not go to extremes in your religion.

[Sūrah al-Nisā', 4:171]

And the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

وَأَيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوفِ فِي الدِّينِ فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ الْغُلُوفِ فِي الدِّينِ

“All of you, beware of extremism in the religion, for those before you were only destroyed because of (religious) extremism.”⁵

Extremism means to go beyond the permissible limits in any issue. So, anyone who goes beyond the limits of the Sunnah, he is guilty of extremism. Anytime the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) had a choice between two things, he would always choose the easier of the two. He was also gentle and decent in speech, pious and merciful (to others). Still, he was stern and strong when the circumstances called for that, lenient and gentle when leniency was preferred.

⁵ Recorded by al-Nasāī (no. 3057) and Ibn Mājah (no. 3029). Shaykh al-Albānī said it is authentic in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah” (no. 2455).

Some people think harshness is always the correct way, yet this is wrong according to Islam's legislation. There are so many situations in which gentleness, simplicity, tolerance, and leniency are required. And for this reason, it's authentically recorded in the two authentic collections of Hadeeth ("Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī" and "Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim") that the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيقٌ يُحِبُّ الرَّفْقَ فِي الْأَمْرِ كُلِّهِ

"Certainly, Allaah is lenient and He loves leniency in all matters."⁶

So, he used to stay far away from tribulations, remained safe from extremism and thus was beloved by Allaah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا).

6. *Opposing the Scholars & Not Referring Back to Them*

The Khawāij didn't refer back to and consult with the companions (of the prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). Instead, they simply relied on their own understanding. In the same way, people today who oppose the leaderships from these misguided sects – these groups that cause tribulations, those who do not distinguish between believers and non-believers but kill anyone they like, those who don't respect any treaty or covenant – these people never refer back to the scholars' understandings or consult with them.

So, one reason for the appearance of tribulations and for (a person) directly causing them is that a person remains firm on his own understanding without referring to the people of knowledge, those well-grounded in it. It is not the case that anyone who simply reads becomes a scholar, just like anyone who searches (for evidence) does not automatically become a researcher or someone of knowledge. Religious knowledge has specialized people that are to be referred back to and consulted with. Therefore, it must be known

⁶ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 6927) and Muslim (no. 2593). The wording in Muslim is slightly different:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيقٌ يُحِبُّ الرَّفْقَ وَيُعْطِي عَلَى الرَّفْقِ مَا لَا يُعْطِي عَلَى الْعُنْفِ وَمَا لَا يُعْطِي عَلَى مَا سِوَاهُ

"Certainly, Allah is lenient (or gentle). He loves leniency and gives due to leniency what He does not give due to harshness and what He does not give due to anything else."

that one of the causes of tribulations is opposing the scholars and never consulting those who are firmly-grounded in religious knowledge.

Based on this, it is these causes and origins together that led to certain groups renouncing obedience and challenging the leaders throughout Islamic history. These causes, all of them together or even some of them, resulted in people becoming an example of this most ugly way.

Examples of the Fitnah

From the examples of the ugliest forms of tribulations, the most famous and very first is that of the Khawārij. The Khawārij are any people who renounce obedience to and oppose the legitimate leadership. They first challenged and revolted against ‘Uthmān (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ), eventually killing him.

Who did they murder next? They murdered ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (the fourth caliph of Islam), the best person of his time. These (‘Uthmān and ‘Alī) were among the very ones foretold that they would enter paradise. The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) even said, praising ‘Uthmān:

مَا ضَرَّ عُثْمَانَ مَا عَمِلَ بَعْدَ الْيَوْمِ

“Nothing ‘Uthmān will ever day after today will harm him.”⁷

Yet their belief that it’s allowed to oppose the leadership and revolt and their personal desires led them to kill ‘Uthmān and later ‘Alī. Did this particular creed of theirs stop there? No, they continued to rebel and kill because they considered such people (the leaders such as ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī) to have contradicted Islamic law. They did not used to consider ‘Uthmān a disbeliever (as many of the Khawārij consider the leaders of today). Rather, they only considered him to have erred when distributing wealth and in some issues of allegiance to people. They said he only distributed wealth and assigned properties as he saw fit (and not according to religious requirements).

Still, the people of knowledge unanimously agree that those people are misguided deviants and they are the dogs of Hell.⁸

⁷ Recorded by al-Tirmidhī (no. 3701) and Shaykh al-Albānī said its chain of narration is good (“Ḥasan”) in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī” (no. 2920).

⁸ This description of them is taken from a Ḥadīth recorded by al-Tirmidhī (no. 3000) and in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī” by al-Albānī (no. 2398) in which Abū Umāmah described them as “The dogs of Hell, the worst of those killed under the sky. And he is the best of those killed – those who they murder.” Abū Umāmah was asked, “Did you hear that from Allah’s messenger?” He replied, “If I did not hear it from him once, twice, three, four, five, six, and even seven times, I would not have said it to you.” [T.N.]

Likewise, they murdered ‘Alī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ). Who was ‘Alī’s murderer? Was it a sinner who used to commit adultery, steal, accept bribes, and drink? No, and maybe someone may do all these sins and still hold ‘Alī in a better position within his heart than ‘Alī’s killer did. So, who was he? The man who murdered ‘Alī was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muljam – it is “Muljam” and not “Muljim”.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muljam was a righteous man in the beginning. ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) (Islam’s second caliph) even sent him to Egypt at the request of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘Āṣ when he said to ‘Umar, “Oh leader of believers, send me a man well-read in the Quran so that he may teach the people of Egypt how to recite the Quran.” So, ‘Umar replied, “I am sending you a man, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muljam, who is from the people of Quran. I am giving preference to you regarding him over myself” – meaning I want him here with me in Medina, but I am giving you preference over myself by sending him to you – “So, when he comes to you, establish a place for him to teach the people to recite the Quran and honor him.”

However, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muljam used not to have religious knowledge. The causes we mentioned entered him and so the Khawārij pulled him in with them.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muljam killed ‘Alī (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ), and when the capital punishment sentence was about to be carried out on him, he said, “Do not kill me all at once. Rather, cut pieces from me one-by-one so I can see pieces of myself tormented for the sake of Allah.” Look at this “love” for Allah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا). Loving Allah and giving one’s self is something great, and he wanted to be cut in pieces – why? Because to him, murdering ‘Alī was something good. Regarding this, the scholars the Sunnah make an important statement; they say that the issue is not whether you love Allah or not because this is merely a claim. Rather, the issue is whether you are loved (by Allah).

So, it is not enough just to say, “I love Allah” and then you do anything and everything you want. The important thing is that you look to what Allah loves and then do only that. But as for you saying, “I love Allah! I want to be slaughtered for the sake of Allah! I want to sacrifice myself for Allah!” – you say these things and then head straight down the wrong

path? This is nothing but a false sense of purpose. You must look to what pleases Allah. It may be that Allah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) prefers tolerance and leniency in its proper place just as He prefers courage and fearlessness in its proper place.

Later, a man by the name of 'Imrān Ibn Hittān began praising this man (Ibn Muljam) who killed 'Alī. 'Imrān himself was one of the Khawārij. The Khawārij are a continuing, recurring people. Did they simply cease and die out? No, they are actually the very foundation of tribulations and they will continue to appear as mentioned in the Ḥadīth:

لَا يَزَالُونَ يَخْرُجُونَ حَتَّى يَخْرُجَ آخِرُهُمْ مَعَ الْمَسِيحِ الدَّجَالِ

“They will not cease to appear until the last of them appear alongside the Anti-Christ.”⁹

Notice he said, “They will not cease to **appear**,” meaning that they will continually appear and then be suppressed, then reappear and again be suppressed. And he (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said about them:

فَإِذَا لَقَيْتُمُوهُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ فَإِنَّ فِي قَتْلِهِمْ أَجْرًا لِمَنْ قَتَلَهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

“When you meet them, fight and kill them, for in killing them there is a reward with Allah on the Day of Resurrection.”¹⁰

“Imrān Ibn Hittān praised 'Alī's murderer, saying in a poem:

Oh he who struck ('Alī) – he who is righteous,

He only intended by it to reach the Owner of the Throne while He is pleased with him.

So, certainly I mention him and praise him –

⁹ Recorded by Aḥmad in “al-Musnad” (4/421), al-Nasā'ī (no. 4103), Ibn Abī Shaybah in “al-Muṣannaf” (no. 37904), al-Bazzār in “al-Musnad” (9/294), and by al-Hākim (2/146-147, no. 2647) and he said, “The Ḥadīth is authentic according to the conditions of Muslim, yet he did not record it.” al-Haythumī said in “Mujamma' al-Zawā'id” (6/299), “Aḥmad recorded it and as for al-Azraq Ibn Qays, Ibn Ḥibbān attested to his trustworthiness, and the rest of the narrators are men of authenticity.” Shaykh al-Albānī said it is weak in “Ḍa'īf Sunan al-Nasā'ī” (no. 278).

¹⁰ Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 6930) and Muslim (no. 1066) and the exact wording is from Muslim. NOTE: It should be known that this permissibility for carrying out capital punishment against them is for the legitimate authorities, and not for every individual, and Allaah knows best. [T.N.]

The most honorable of creation in reward with Allah.

Who is he praising? He is honoring the one who murdered 'Alī. May Allah disgrace that filthy criminal.

So, the origin of tribulations, or at least one of its causes, throughout history has been going too far in religiousness, introducing what is not from it. Beware of having a sense of religiousness yet applying it in the wrong way. When you follow a false and wrong sense of religiosity, you won't be saved. Rather you will become just like those people who deviated.

The concern here is that you must sincerely teach and advise yourselves, be correctly-religious following the Book and Sunnah and following the companions according to the methodology of the Salaf. Caution yourselves against evil intentions.

And beware of anything that may lead to tribulations, such as even listening to these people of wicked desires who cause problems. Some people take it easy with themselves, putting themselves into danger. They listen to this person and that person, sit and spend time with these very people who cause the tribulations. No, one way to save yourself – and prevention is better than the cure – is to avoid evil companions, those who cause and invite to these problems. Some scholars of the Salaf said, “Do not lend your ears to a person of wicked desires, for he will give you no revelations.”

If you start sitting with them, you start taking it easy with them, (saying things like) “By Allah these people have enthusiasm! These people actually do something (for the religion)! These people make Jihad while others just sit (and do nothing)!” You listen and listen and then eventually the tribulations come to you and deviance comes.

You have to take a clear stance against these issues, a clear protective position. Do not take it easy with regards to listening (to these people), because a person is most often affected by what? By what he hears.

Another example of some tribulations that have taken place is that a group of people almost captured the Ka'bah – people who attribute themselves to Islam. The Ka'bah is a place that if a wicked sinner would visit it, once he sees it perhaps he'd start crying, his heart may soften and not be inclined to sin. Still, a group of people infiltrated it, due to their extreme religiousness, with violence, having no concern whatsoever for anything sacred, not even for the Ka'bah. They pulled out the black stone and took it back with them from Mecca to Aḥsā (a city in Saudi Arabia) which used to be called Bahrain at that time. There it remained with them for about twenty years, from 317 Hijrah (about 929 C.E.) to 339 Hijrah (about 950 C.E.).

The author, al-Khirqī, who wrote “Mukhtaṣar al-Ḥanābilah” which Ibn Qudāmah explained in “al-Mughnī” wrote his book during that time period when there was no black stone at the Ka'bah. Those people killed hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, stealing the black stone in the name of religion. About the rules for making Hajj, al-Khirqī writes in his book, “...and the pilgrim kisses the black stone **if it is there**,” because there was nothing in its place at that time. The heart bled due to the fact that some people would actually come and steal the black stone. But a false sense of religiousness, misinterpretation, and ignorance led them to do it.

Similar are the latest incidents at the sacred mosque in Mecca that occurred in 1/1/1400 Hijrah (1979 C.E.). And the cause of such incidents? Did anyone doubt or suspect those people? No, outwardly they seemed like good, religious people, students seeking knowledge, even attending the scholars' lecture circles. Yet, misguidance and tribulations came to them because of their extremism, their ignorance, their following unclear and unspecific evidences, their own opinions, and other reasons. They led them to turn the sacred sanctity into a place of terror. Allah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) has made the sacred mosque a place of safety and security for who? He even keeps the birds there safe, the pigeons, even some insects there no one bothers them. So, how do these people then come and commit what they did in the name of religion?

Also, the recent bombings are also examples of tribulations – those that happened in Riyadh, those before in Riyadh and Khobar, and before them in other Muslims lands like

Egypt, Indonesia, and many other places. They come to people who feel safe and secure, Muslims and Non-Muslims, and they kill them all.

These are some of the worst calamities of modern times. They result in a number of things Islam is opposed to: horrible tribulations that affect the religion, leaving the straight path, and following the way of the Khawārij are just some of them. Others are:

Committing such crimes includes murder, even suicide, and Allah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) says:

﴿ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا ﴾

And do not kill yourselves; certainly Allaah is merciful to you.

[Sūrah al-Nisā', 4:29]

They also entail killing Muslims. Allah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) says:

﴿ وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا ﴾

And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to reside therein.

[Sūrah al-Nisā', 4:93]

Some of those killed in Riyadh were Muslims. Even a young Muslim boy was walking, fleeing the scene, and they struck him in the head. It was well-known he was a Muslim running away. He had no weapons – nothing – yet they struck him in the head. He and many others were killed.

They also killed Non-Muslims residing there who were promised safety and security (simply by being allowed to legally enter the country). Where are these people (the terrorists) when it comes to the prophet's statement (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

مَنْ قَتَلَ مُعَاهِدًا لَمْ يَرِحْ رَائِحَةَ الْجَنَّةِ

“Whoever kills a Mu’āhad¹¹ won’t even smell the fragrance of Paradise.”¹²

Who promised those Non-Muslims they would be safe and secure? Muslim leaders give this promise. Who guarantees their safety? The leader (president, government, etc.), or chief, or even if a single Muslim promises someone’s safety, it is then forbidden to show hostility against him because Muslims have guaranteed their blood to be safe.¹³ And even the lowest Muslim must uphold such a guarantee.¹⁴

These crimes are also a violation of people’s wealth and property while the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) says:

كُلُّ الْمُسْلِمِ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِ حَرَامٌ دَمُهُ وَمَالُهُ وَعِرْضُهُ

“Every Muslim is sacred to another Muslim: his blood, wealth, and honor.”¹⁵

The property of those structures (bombed and destroyed) – who did they belong to? Did they not belong to Muslims? What right do you have to destroy another Muslim’s property

¹¹ Mu’āhad: a Non-Muslim at peace with Muslims. [T.N.]

¹² Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 3166) from the Ḥadīth of ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Amr (رضي الله عنه).

¹³ About this, a woman named Umm Hāni once said to the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), “Oh messenger of Allah, Ibn Umm ‘Alī says he is going to kill a man (a Non-Muslim) whom I have promised would not be harmed.” So, the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

□ قَدْ أَجَرْنَا مَنْ أَجَرْتِ يَا أُمَّ هَانِي

“We will guarantee safety to whom you have guaranteed it, oh Umm Hāni.”

The Ḥadīth is recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 357) [T.N.]

¹⁴ And the proof for this is the prophet’s statement (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

ذِمَّةُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَاحِدَةٌ يَسْعَى بِهَا أَدْنَاهُمْ، فَمَنْ أَخْفَرَ مُسْلِمًا فَعَلَيْهِ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ لَا

يُقْبَلُ مِنْهُ صَرْفٌ وَلَا عَدْلٌ

“The asylum (pledge of protection) granted by the Muslims is a joint responsibility that even the lowest in position is to undertake. Whoever disgraces a Muslim (in this respect), then the curse of Allah is upon him and that of the angels and mankind all together and none of his optional or compulsory deeds will be accepted.”

The Ḥadīth is recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 6755) and Muslim (no. 1370). [T.N.]

¹⁵ Recorded by Muslim (no. 2564).

and infringe on their wealth? Where are you when it comes to this Ḥadīth? It's nothing but extremism that leads to these tribulations.

There are many other examples throughout history, old and recent, like these. It should be clear that it's absolutely necessary to warn against and be cautious of these tribulations and those who bring them about whether they are based on doubtful evidences or based on evil intentions.

The Solution

As for the solution, I will just mention some quick points without detailed explanations.

1. First, it is incumbent upon us to resort to and adhere to the Book and Sunnah. Allah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) says:

﴿ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ ﴾

Obey Allaah and obey the messenger.

[Sūrah al-Nisā', 4:59]

2. We also have to follow the clear and obvious evidences from Allah's speech and that of His messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) as well as the statement and opinions of the scholars. And we should leave the doubtful, unclear, and unspecific texts.
3. We should stick to the understanding of the well-known scholars firmly-grounded in religious knowledge and not turn to road construction workers, for example, for our knowledge.
4. We must also stick with the mainstream body of Muslims and not split up into separate, opposing sects as Allaah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) says:

﴿ وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ﴾

And hold fast to the rope of Allah (the Quran) all of you together and do not become divided.

[Sūrah Āli-'Imrān, 3:103]

And the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) says to you:

الْجَمَاعَةُ رَحْمَةٌ وَالْفُرْقَةُ عَذَابٌ

“The unified group is a mercy, and division is a punishment.”¹⁶

So, anyone who causes division in any way, then he has entered into tribulations from its doors that are the widest open (causing division among people). And there occurs in a Ḥadīth:

الْفِتْنَةُ نَائِمَةٌ لَعَنَ اللَّهُ مَنْ أَيْقَظَهَا

“Tribulations are dormant; Allah curses the one who awakens them.”

The Ḥadīth is recorded by Ibn al-Najjār in his book of history and by others with a chain of narration that has some issues with it.

5. Another remedy for tribulations is to give concern and make effort to unite people’s views. Tribulations do not appear except in a land that division and sectarianism is prevalent. They rarely appear in a unified nation.

¹⁶ Recorded by Imam Aḥmad (no. 17981).

A Muslim's Position

So, based on this, your position, oh Muslim, if you want to safeguard yourself – safeguard your blood and your honor – and to really support Allah's religion, then beware of tribulations. How? By never leaving any ground where tribulations can be cultivated. And how do you do that? By having a sincere concern to unite people's views.

Sure, there may be corruption, there may be sins, there may be crimes, there may be this and that. But the overall well-being is in what? The overall well-being comes when people are united in their views. This is because evil desires come and go. The problem with evil tendencies is that they lead to sin, but they come and go. Yes, acting on evil impulses is forbidden, but then afterwards, a person may ask Allah to forgive him, repent, rectify himself having remorse and regret (for having sinned). And one prayer to the next makes up for bad deeds, as does one Ramadan to the next, one 'Umrah to the next, and an accepted pilgrimage has no reward but Paradise.

However, as for the problem of following doubtful evidences – what is the cure for that? Someone with misguided and doubtful opinions will begin acting religiously based on them and they will remain within him. Yet, as for sinful impulses, a person may ask for forgiveness, repent to Allah, saying, "I have sinned, my Lord," while he regrets it inside. When he prays, he hopes his sin would be forgiven, saying, "Forgive me, Allah."

But someone who follows misinterpretations, why would he ask Allah's forgiveness? He doesn't ask Allah's forgiveness for killing a Muslim. He does not ask forgiveness from Allah (تُبَايَعِي) for detonating bombs. He does not ask Allah's forgiveness for any of these things he does because he considers them means of getting closer to Allah (جَلُّ وَعَلَا). He thinks of himself as a martyr, as someone making Jihad.

But working towards uniting people and unifying them – this prevents those kinds of things. And Allah instructs us to take the correct means as well as the ends.

These are just some of the means and ways to prevent such tribulations. Your position, oh Muslims, should be to remain far away from tribulations and not simply far away. Second, you must safeguard yourself. And third, you should be a true Muslim, making Jihad by striving against tribulations. Jihad, in this way, is of several types:

Jihad is to strive against these misguided sects and groups.

Jihad is to strive to unite people.

Jihad is to strive to fulfill what is really intended by Allah and His messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ) in the Book and Sunnah, and to prevent any sort of tribulations, public or hidden, from affecting the religion.

And the true Jihad is to be a knowledgeable, righteous, element in that you do not allow Satan to enter these lands by any means. Allah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) has rectified these lands and other Muslim lands, so how can we work to corrupt them? Allah (جَلَّ وَعَلَا) says:

﴿ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ﴾

Do not cause corruption on earth after its rectification.

[Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7:56]

Do not spread corruption after rectification in all meanings of the words. Do not spread corruption on earth with Shirk (worshipping something other than or along with Allah) after rectification with Tawhīd (the worship of Allah alone).

Hopefully what I have mentioned is sufficient; the issue is actually very long, detailed, and important.

I repeat my gratitude to all the brothers present, to the organizers of this event, and to those scholars who spoke before me at this conference. I thank everyone for listening in a good manner.

I ask the Lord (جَلُّ وَعَلَا) to grant us success in what pleases Him.

Oh Allah, grant success to the leader of our affairs to follow what pleases You.

Oh Allah, unite us on truth and guidance.

Oh Allah, anyone who intends evil for us, repel his plot against himself.

Oh Allah, anyone who intends to cause tribulations among us, make his tribulations against himself and make it a lesson for others.

Oh Allah, reward the leader of our affairs with good for their efforts to benefit Islam and the Muslims.

Oh Allah, reward the person who won the prize with good.¹⁷

And make all of us people who follow truth and stay on its path and those who struggle in preventing tribulations and enforcing the truth; You are certainly kind and generous.

And may peace and prayers be on our prophet, Muhammad.

¹⁷ Perhaps Ṣāliḥ Āli-Shaykh is referring to someone who won some sort of contest during the event, and Allah knows best. [T.N.]