



SALAF AL-SALIH

FOUNDATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING THE RELIGION

THE HEART IS WEAK

The Salaf's Fear of Listening
to the People of Innovation

A study on guarding the heart from doubts,
desires, and deviant speech through the guidance
of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the understanding
of the Salaf.

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FOUNDATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING THE RELIGION

The Heart Is Weak

Why the Salaf guarded their hearing and hearts from unnecessary religious falsehood - and how revelation preserves the distinction between precaution, qualified refutation, necessary interaction, and justice.

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Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim.

The truth revealed by Allah is not weak. The Qur'an does not need protection from falsehood because falsehood is intellectually stronger than revelation, nor did the Salaf avoid the people of deviation because they lacked proofs, feared every disagreement, or believed that a Muslim should never examine an objection.

Their concern was different.

They feared for the servant.

A person may possess knowledge and still require Allah to keep his heart firm. He may know a correct principle and then hear a distorted interpretation of an ayah that he has never considered. He may enter an argument certain that he can “filter” everything he hears, then find himself occupied by a doubt he did not need to carry. He may become accustomed to a speaker, impressed by eloquence, attached through companionship, or confused by repeated exposure. A person may also mistake confidence in himself for protection from Allah.

For this reason, the early Muslims did not treat unnecessary exposure to religious falsehood as spiritually neutral.

The subject requires precision. This article is not a complete study of *hajr*—formal boycotting as an applied religious measure. It is not a catalogue of sects. It does not declare particular living people innovators. It does not claim that every Muslim who makes an error becomes from Ahl al-Bid'ah. It does not claim that every debate is prohibited, that scholars may never examine falsehood, or that every instance of hearing a mistaken statement automatically produces deviation.

Its subject is narrower:

Why did the Salaf guard their hearing, their gatherings, and their hearts from unnecessary religious falsehood, and what should the Muslim learn from their statement that “the heart is weak”?

The answer begins before any report from the Salaf: with the servant's dependence upon Allah.

1. Guidance and Firmness Are from Allah

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إن قلوب بني آدم كلها بين إصبعين من أصابع الرحمن، كقلب واحد، يصرفه حيث يشاء

“The hearts of all the children of Adam are between two fingers of the Most Merciful, like a single heart; He directs them however He wills.”

He then supplicated:

اللهم مصرف القلوب صرف قلوبنا على طاعتك

“O Director of the hearts, direct our hearts to Your obedience.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih Muslim, no. 2654. Authentic.

The point required here is the servant's dependence: the heart is not independently self-protecting.

The believer learns. He reasons. He studies evidence. He takes lawful means to preserve his religion. But none of those means makes him independent of Allah.

This is why confidence must be placed in its proper position.

There is a legitimate confidence that comes from knowing evidence and recognizing truth. That is not blameworthy. The problem is when a servant quietly converts knowledge into a claim of immunity:

- “I already know the correct answer.”
- “I am intelligent enough to separate truth from falsehood.”

- "I only want to see what they say."
- "A doubt cannot affect me."
- "If the argument is weak, I will simply discard it."
- "I can enter any religious controversy and leave exactly as I entered."

None of those statements changes the fact that the Prophet ﷺ himself taught the Ummah to ask Allah to direct their hearts toward obedience.

Allah taught the believers to say:

ربنا لا تزغ قلوبنا بعد إذ هديتنا وهب لنا من لدنك رحمة إنك أنت الوهاب

"Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from Yourself. Indeed, You are the Bestower."

Source: Qur'an, Al 'Imran 3:8.

The supplication comes immediately after Allah describes people whose hearts contain deviation and who pursue what is ambiguous in revelation.

That sequence is instructive.

Guidance is a gift. Remaining guided is also a gift. The believer therefore seeks knowledge while remaining humble before Allah, rather than making his intellect, memory, debating experience, or confidence a substitute for dependence upon Him.

This is the first meaning behind the title **The Heart Is Weak**.

It does not mean that every believer is equally ignorant. It does not mean that knowledge has no protective effect. It means that no servant possesses an independent guarantee that he cannot be tested, confused, impressed, weakened, or changed.

2. Revelation Warns about Deviant Use of the Texts

Before examining what Ibn Sirin, Abu Qilabah, Ibn Tawus, or 'Abd al-Razzaq did, the governing evidence must come from revelation.

Allah said:

هو الذي أنزل عليك الكتاب منه آيات محكمات هن أم الكتاب وأخر متشابهات فأما الذين في قلوبهم زيغ فيتبعون ما تشابه منه ابتغاء الفتنة وابتغاء تأويله...

"He is the One who revealed to you the Book. In it are verses that are clear and decisive; they are the foundation of the Book, while others are ambiguous. As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they follow what is ambiguous from it, seeking fitnah and seeking its interpretation..."

Source: Qur'an, Al 'Imran 3:7.

'A'ishah رضي الله عنها reported that after reciting this ayah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

فإذا رأيتم الذين يتبعون ما تشابه منه فأولئك الذين سمى الله فاحذروهم

"When you see those who follow what is ambiguous from it, then they are those whom Allah has named, so beware of them."

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 4547; Sahih Muslim, no. 2665. Agreed upon and authentic.

This warning is decisive.

The danger is not always that a person openly rejects the Qur'an. Religious deviation frequently presents itself through the Qur'an itself: an ambiguous text is isolated, a clear text is neglected, a term is redefined, a verse is removed from its context, or revelation is made to serve a doctrine already chosen beforehand.

Al-Tabari explained the ريغ mentioned in the ayah as inclination away from the truth. His tafsir also records the application of the Prophetic warning to the innovator who uses ambiguous Qur'anic wording in support of a doctrine contrary to what the Messenger ﷺ brought.

A critical distinction must be preserved here.

The verse and hadith describe a **general characteristic**: pursuing ambiguity in order to produce fitnah and false interpretation. They do not authorize every reader to take a Muslim who makes a mistake and immediately pronounce upon him the full technical judgment of being from Ahl al-Bid'ah.

The general warning is one matter. Applying a technical judgment to a particular person is another.

Allah also said:

وقد نزل عليكم في الكتاب أن إذا سمعتم آيات الله يكفر بها ويستهزأ بها فلا تقعدوا معهم حتى يخوضوا في حديث غيره إنكم إذا مثلهم

"He has already revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's verses being disbelieved in and mocked, then do not sit with them until they enter into another discussion; otherwise, you would then be like them."

Source: Qur'an, al-Nisa' 4:140.

The direct subject is clear: a gathering in which Allah's verses are being disbelieved in and mocked.

Al-Tabari then stated:

وفي هذه الآية، الدلالة الواضحة على النهي عن مجالسة أهل الباطل من كل نوع، من المبتدعة والفسقة، عند خوضهم في باطلهم

"In this verse is a clear indication of the prohibition of sitting with people of falsehood of every type—from the people of innovation and the openly sinful—while they are engaged in their falsehood."

Source: al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan*, tafsir of Qur'an 4:140.

Again, the levels of evidence must not be collapsed.

The ayah itself speaks explicitly about disbelief in and mockery of Allah's verses. Al-Tabari then explains a broader application concerning remaining with people of falsehood while they are engaged in that falsehood.

Allah likewise said:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ وَإِمَّا يُنسِينُكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

“When you see those who engage [improperly] concerning Our verses, turn away from them until they enter into another discussion. If Satan should make you forget, then after remembering do not remain with the wrongdoing people.”

Source: Qur'an, al-An'am 6:68.

Ibn Kathir explains the immediate context of this condemned engagement as denial and mockery and then applies the command to those who distort Allah's verses and place them outside their proper meanings.

These verses do not mean that a Muslim must flee every disagreement, never answer an objection, or never speak to a mistaken person. They establish something more fundamental:

A believer is not commanded to remain passively present while prohibited falsehood concerning Allah's revelation is being advanced.

Revelation itself therefore establishes the principle that the gathering, the discourse, and the manner in which Allah's texts are being handled matter.

3. Fitan Are Presented to Hearts

Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman رضى الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

تعرض الفتن على القلوب كالحصير عودا عودا، فأى قلب أشربها نكت فيه نكتة سوداء، وأى قلب أنكرها نكت فيه نكتة بيضاء

“Fitan are presented to the hearts like a mat woven reed by reed. Any heart that absorbs them has a black mark placed in it, and any heart that rejects them has a white mark placed in it...”

Source and authenticity: Sahih Muslim, no. 144. Authentic.

The hadith is broader than the specific issue of listening to an innovator. It concerns fitan being presented to hearts and hearts accepting or rejecting them.

For the present discussion, its importance is that it prevents a false model of the spiritual heart.

The heart is not a sealed chamber into which information enters without moral or religious consequence. A servant hears, sees, considers, desires, rejects, accepts, becomes familiar, becomes doubtful, strengthens, weakens, remembers, forgets, and is tested.

At the same time, the hadith must not be pushed beyond what it establishes.

It does not say that every mistaken sentence heard by a Muslim automatically becomes accepted by him. It does not say that every listener necessarily deviates. It does not establish a simplistic theory that “the ear mechanically transfers bid'ah into the heart.”

It establishes the reality of exposure and response: fitan are presented, and hearts do not all respond to them in the same manner.

That is enough to explain why precaution is not irrational.

If revelation itself teaches that hearts may absorb fitnah, then a Muslim does not need to prove his courage by voluntarily multiplying fitnah around himself.

4. The Salaf Guarded the Hearing Before Doubts Settled

The Salaf did not merely teach this as an abstract theory. Their conduct shows how seriously they took the vulnerability of the heart.

The reports below use **أهل الأهواء** or **أصحاب الأهواء**. In their direct translations here, these expressions are rendered “people of desires” or “adherents of desires.” The reports themselves concern deviant religious discourse, and the source terminology is preserved rather than mechanically replacing every occurrence with a different technical label.

Abu Qilabah: what you know can become confused

Abu Qilabah رحمه الله said:

لا تجالسوا أهل الأهواء ولا تجادلوهم، فإني لا آمن أن يغمسوكم في ضلالتهم، أو يلبسوا عليكم ما كنتم تعرفون

“Do not sit with the people of desires and do not dispute with them, for I do not feel safe that they may immerse you in their misguidance or confuse you concerning what you used to know.”

Source and grading: al-Darimi, *Musnad al-Darimi*, ed. Husayn Salim Asad al-Darani, report no. 405. The editor states: **إسناده صحيح** — “Its chain is authentic.”

The wording is precise.

Abu Qilabah did not merely warn the ignorant. His second concern was that a person might become confused regarding **what he already knew**.

This directly addresses a common assumption:

“Because I already know the answer, listening is harmless.”

Prior knowledge is valuable. It is one of the means of protection. But Abu Qilabah did not regard prior knowledge as an absolute guarantee against confusion.

Nor did he say that every listener would certainly become misguided. His wording is:

فإني لا آمن

He did not regard the person as secure from the feared harm.

That is the correct level of certainty for this article: **real danger and justified precaution**, not an invented universal law.

Ibn Sirin: the danger was distortion, not revelation

Two men from the people of desires came to Muhammad ibn Sirin رحمه الله. They offered to narrate something to him. He refused. They then offered to recite an ayah from the Book of Allah. He refused that as well.

The report states:

دخل رجلان من أصحاب الأهواء على ابن سيرين فقالا: يا أبا بكر نحدثك بحديث؟ قال: لا. قال: فنقرأ عليك آية من كتاب الله؟ قال: لا، لتقومان عني أو لأقومن. قال: فخرجا. فقال بعض القوم: يا أبا بكر، وما كان عليك أن يقرأ عليك آية من كتاب الله تعالى؟ قال: إني خشيت أن يقرأ علي آية فيحرفانها، فيقر ذلك في قلبي

Two men from the people of desires entered upon Ibn Sirin and said, “O Abu Bakr, may we narrate a report to you?” He said, “No.” They said, “Then may we recite an ayah from Allah’s Book to you?” He said, “No. Either you two leave me or I will get up.” So they left. Someone said, “O Abu Bakr, what harm would there have been in their reciting an ayah from Allah’s Book to you?” He replied, “I feared that they would recite an ayah to me and distort it, and that this would settle in my heart.”

Source and grading: al-Darimi, *Musnad al-Darimi*, ed. Husayn Salim Asad al-Darani, report no. 411. The editor states: **إسناده صحيح**.

This report is especially important because it removes a serious misunderstanding.

Ibn Sirin was not afraid of hearing the Qur’an.

He feared that people of desires would **attach a distortion to the Qur’an**, and that the distortion—not the revelation—would remain in his heart.

This is one of the most common forms of religious fitnah. Falsehood does not always approach announcing itself as falsehood. It may arrive attached to an ayah, a hadith, a statement of an imam, a technical term, or a partial truth.

The listener may then remember the association long after he forgets the context in which it first appeared.

Al-Hasan and Ibn Sirin: do not voluntarily make yourself their audience

Al-Darimi also reports from al-Hasan al-Basri and Muhammad ibn Sirin **رحمهما الله**:

لا تجالسوا أصحاب الأهواء، ولا تجادلوهم، ولا تسمعوا منهم

“Do not sit with the people of desires, do not dispute with them, and do not listen to them.”

Source and grading: al-Darimi, *Musnad al-Darimi*, ed. Husayn Salim Asad al-Darani, report no. 415. The editor states: **إسناده صحيح**.

The wording includes three avenues:

- sitting;
- disputing;
- listening.

The issue is not merely physical proximity. It is granting repeated access to one’s attention in religious matters.

This does not erase every exception. A scholar may have to examine falsehood to refute it. A person may hear something incidentally. A relative, workplace, school, or other circumstance may create necessary interaction. Those distinctions will be addressed below.

But the baseline warning remains clear:

These reports show that these imams did not regard voluntarily becoming an audience for deviant religious teaching as harmless.

Ibn Tawus: “for the heart is weak”

Ma’mar **رحمه الله** said:

أخبرنا عبد الرزاق، عن معمر، قال: كنت عند ابن طاوس، وعنده ابن له، إذ أتاه رجل يقال له صالح يتكلم في القدر، فتكلم بشيء، فتنبه، فأدخل ابن طاوس إصبعيه في أذنيه، وقال لابنه: أدخل أصابعك في أذنيك واشدد، فلا تسمع من قوله شيئاً فإن القلب ضعيف

“I was with Ibn Tawus, and a son of his was with him, when a man called Salih came to him speaking about al-Qadar. He said something, so Ibn Tawus became alert, put his fingers into his ears, and said to his son: ‘Put your fingers into your ears and press firmly, and do not listen to anything he says, for the heart is weak.’”

Source: ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-San’ani, *al-Musannaf*, ed. Habib al-Rahman al-A’zami, 2nd ed., 1403 AH, 11/125, no. 20099.

Shaykh Muqbil ibn Hadi al-Wadi’i also cited this report in *al-Jami’ al-Sahih fi al-Qadar* and stated:

هذا الأثر صحيح

“This report is authentic.”

Al-Lalika’i also transmits a related variant in which Ma’mar explains:

يعني أن القلب ضعيف

“Meaning that the heart is weak.”

The two wordings are not to be merged into one synthetic quotation. The primary *Musannaf* wording above is sufficient.

The lesson is not that Ibn Tawus had no knowledge. The lesson is that knowledge did not produce arrogance about the heart.

That is the opposite of the modern temptation to say:

“If I am grounded, I should be able to listen to anything.”

The Salaf’s model was not to seek unnecessary tests in order to prove firmness. Their firmness included knowing what not to place before the heart.

5. “The Religion Is Not for the One Who Prevails”

Al-Lalika’i and al-Bayhaqi report from ‘Abd al-Razzaq al-San’ani رحمه الله that Ibrahim ibn Abi Yahya proposed that he enter a shop with him so that they could speak. ‘Abd al-Razzaq refused. When asked why, he replied:

لأن القلب ضعيف، وإن الدين ليس لمن غلب

“Because the heart is weak, and the religion is not [determined] by whoever prevails.”

Sources: al-Lalika’i, *Sharh Usul I’tiqad Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jama’ah*, ed. Ahmad ibn Sa’d al-Ghamidi, Dar Taybah, 8th ed., 1423 AH/2003 CE, report no. 249; al-Bayhaqi, *al-Qada wa-l-Qadar*, ed. Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Allah Al ‘Amir, Maktabat al-‘Ubaykan, 1st ed., 1421 AH/2000 CE, p. 323, no. 552.

A formal grading label for this exact athar is not asserted here. Its attribution and early source transmission are established sufficiently for the present use.

The second sentence requires careful translation.

The Arabic does not literally say, “The religion belongs to whoever wins the argument.” It says:

وإن الدين ليس لمن غلب

Literally: **"The religion is not [determined] by whoever prevails."**

The context is disputation, so the explanatory meaning is clear:

Religious truth is not decided by whoever appears to win the argument.

A person may be more eloquent and still be wrong.

He may know more philosophical terminology and still be wrong.

He may overwhelm a less experienced Muslim and still be wrong.

He may speak faster, quote more, interrupt better, tell a more compelling story, or control the emotional atmosphere and still be wrong.

Conversely, a person may know the truth but be poor at public debate.

Truth does not change according to rhetorical dominance.

This follows the principle established in the preceding study, *When Opinions Overcome Revelation*: revelation governs judgment. Human opinion, prior theory, ideology, desire, and rhetorical force do not become a court over revelation.

The present study adds another layer:

Because the listener himself is vulnerable, he should not treat every rhetorical contest as a safe place to test the religion.

A debate can create the illusion that whoever "won" in presentation proved the truth of his doctrine. The Salaf therefore separated two questions that people often merge:

1. What is true according to revelation?
2. Who appeared stronger in a particular exchange?

Those are not the same question.

6. The False Confidence: "I Can Listen and Filter It"

There is a particular form of self-confidence that presents itself as intellectual strength:

"I only listen so I can understand their doubts."

Sometimes that statement is true and legitimate. A scholar preparing a refutation may need to understand the argument accurately. A grounded student may need to verify what was actually said. A person engaged in da'wah may need to hear someone's confusion before answering it.

But the statement can also conceal something else:

- curiosity without need;
- attraction to controversy;
- desire to test oneself;
- enjoyment of polemics;
- confidence unsupported by real knowledge;
- or a habit of exposing the heart to doubtful material simply because it is available.

The Prophet ﷺ gave a striking warning concerning al-Dajjal.

He said:

من سمع بالدجال فليأمن عنه، فوالله إن الرجل ليأتيه وهو يحسب أنه مؤمن فيتبعه مما يبعث به من الشبهات

“Whoever hears of al-Dajjal should keep far away from him. By Allah, a man will come to him thinking that he is a believer, then follow him because of the doubts he brings.”

Source and grading: Sunan Abi Dawud, no. 4319; also reported by Ahmad with wording variation. Graded authentic by Shaykh al-Albani in *Sahih Abi Dawud*.

This hadith directly concerns al-Dajjal. It must not be misused.

It does **not** mean that every person of innovation is equivalent to al-Dajjal. It does not establish that every ordinary interaction has the same ruling as approaching him. It is not a direct one-to-one legal proof for every contemporary situation.

Its supporting lesson is nevertheless unmistakable:

A servant can think himself firm and still be overcome by a fitnah he voluntarily approaches.

The problem is not merely lack of intelligence.

A person may be intelligent and impressed by a sophisticated argument.

He may be knowledgeable in one field and ignorant in another.

He may recognize an error in creed yet become attached to the speaker through personality, humor, shared grievance, or repeated exposure.

He may reject a conclusion at first but gradually become comfortable with its premises.

He may begin “only to know what they say” and later discover that the person has become one of his regular religious sources.

This article does not say that these outcomes occur automatically. It says that they are sufficiently real that revelation and the Salaf taught precaution.

Al-Dhahabi رحمه الله later summarized the early methodology:

قلت: أكثر أئمة السلف على هذا التحذير، يرون أن القلوب ضعيفة، والشبه خطافة

“I say: most of the imams of the Salaf were upon this warning; they regarded hearts as weak and doubts as quick to snatch [a person].”

Source: al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*, ed. a group of researchers under the supervision of Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut, Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 3rd ed., 1405 AH/1985 CE, 7/261.

This is al-Dhahabi's later synthesis, not a Prophetic text and not part of the earlier Ibn Tawus report.

The phrase captures the principle well: doubts can seize a person quickly. A servant therefore protects himself before he is forced to solve a problem he did not need to invite into his own heart.

7. Necessary Distinctions: When Engagement Is Legitimate

A warning becomes distorted if its necessary distinctions are suppressed.

The Salaf's caution does not mean that every interaction with a person affected by innovation is prohibited, that every disagreement requires boycotting, or that scholars cannot study and answer falsehood.

A. Qualified refutation is not the same as recreational exposure

Allah said:

ادع إلى سبيل ربك بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة وجادلهم بالتي هي أحسن

“Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in the manner that is best.”

Source: Qur'an, al-Nahl 16:125.

Ibn Kathir explained the command **وجادلهم بالتي هي أحسن** by saying that whoever among them requires debate and disputation should be addressed in the best manner, with gentleness, leniency, and good speech.

Source: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, tafsir of Qur'an 16:125.

The revealed command itself therefore shows that not every form of argumentation is prohibited. The question is **how, why, and by whom** it is undertaken.

A person cannot answer a particular claim accurately without understanding what is actually being claimed. Therefore the correct principle cannot be:

“No Muslim may ever hear or read a false claim.”

The question is one of **purpose, qualification, need, and likely benefit**.

The ordinary Muslim who deliberately consumes doubtful religious material for entertainment is not in the same position as a scholar examining a doctrine in order to refute it.

A grounded student verifying a specific clip is not necessarily in the same position as someone following hours of teaching from the same speaker every week.

A person asking a mistaken Muslim what he believes so that he can advise him is not automatically the same as becoming his student or companion.

A later extended study, *Listening to the People of Innovation: Texts and Exceptions*, is reserved for the detailed technical treatment of these matters.

B. Advice and da'wah are not the same as companionship for affection

Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Baz رحمه الله said:

أما زيارة أهل البدع فلا تجوز زيارتهم على سبيل المؤانسة والمحبة، ونحو ذلك. أما إذا زارهم طالب العلم للموعظة والتذكير والتحذير من البدعة؛ هذا مشكور ومأجور؛ لأن هذا من باب الدعوة إلى الله، من باب الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر

“As for visiting the people of innovation, one should not visit them for social familiarity, affection, and the like. But if a student of knowledge visits them in order to admonish, remind, and warn against the innovation, then he is thanked and rewarded, because this is from calling to Allah and from commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong.”

He continued:

وينبغي أن لا تدع ذلك إذا كان فيه فائدة، أما إذا أصروا ولم يستجيبوا فدعهم

“One should not abandon that when there is benefit in it. But if they persist and do not respond, then leave them.”

Source: Official website of Shaykh Ibn Baz, fatwa no. 13707, حكم زيارة أهل البدع من أجل دعوتهم.

This is an important balance.

The warning against harmful companionship does not abolish da'wah.

Nor does the legitimacy of da'wah abolish the warning.

A person must not rename social attachment "da'wah" merely to justify it. At the same time, he must not use general warnings as an excuse to abandon a legitimate opportunity for advice when he is qualified and benefit is reasonably expected.

C. Formal *hajr* is a separate applied question

Shaykh Ibn Baz also said:

يهجر إذا كان الهجر أصلح، ويترك الهجر إذا كان الترك أصلح مع إنكار المنكر

"He is boycotted when boycotting is more beneficial, and boycotting is left when leaving it is more beneficial, while the wrongdoing is still rejected."

Source: Official website of Shaykh Ibn Baz, fatwa no. 7552, ما السبيل الأمثل في الدعوة إلى الله والأمر بالمعروف؟

Formal *hajr* is an applied religious measure whose application can vary with benefit, harm, circumstance, the condition of the person, and the likely result.

This article is not a *hajr* manual.

The principle established here is simpler: **general Salaf warnings against voluntarily exposing oneself to false religious teaching must not be converted into one mechanically identical social ruling for every circumstance.**

D. Incidental hearing is not deliberate discipleship

A person may hear something at school, work, in a family setting, or in a public place. He may need to hear a short clip to verify an exact statement. He may encounter a mistaken view while fulfilling another obligation.

That is not automatically identical to deliberately selecting someone as a regular religious source.

The early wording itself frequently concerns deliberate conduct:

- sitting;
- disputing;
- listening;
- entering a private exchange;
- giving a person access to one's hearing.

The article therefore targets **voluntary religious exposure without legitimate need**, not every accidental sound that reaches the ear.

E. Falling into innovation is not identical to the technical judgment that a person is an innovator

This distinction is essential.

Shaykh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani رحمه الله said:

بعض الأئمة وقعوا في البدعة ... لكننا مع ذلك ما نقول على أولئك الذين وقعوا في البدعة أنهم مبتدعة

"Some of the imams fell into innovation ... yet despite that, we do not say of those who fell into innovation that they were innovators."

Source: Official Imam al-Albani archive, *Silsilat al-Huda wa-l-Nur*, tape no. 1002, indexed at 00:23:58.

The point needed here is narrow: the occurrence of an innovated statement or act and the technical judgment upon a particular person are not automatically identical.

Determining the status of a particular person is a separate scholarly matter requiring knowledge and verification. General texts warning against people of innovation are not a licence for every reader to begin classifying named Muslims on his own.

The purpose here is to teach protection of the heart without turning the article into a manual for personal *tabdi'*.

8. Companionship, Familiarity, and Gradual Influence

Listening is not the only avenue by which people influence one another.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إنما مثل الجليس الصالح والجليس السوء، كحامل المسك ونافخ الكير، فحامل المسك إما أن يحذيك، وإما أن تبتاع منه، وإما أن تجد منه ريحاً طيبة، ونافخ الكير إما أن يحرق ثيابك، وإما أن تجد ريحاً خبيثة

“The example of the righteous companion and the bad companion is like the bearer of musk and the blower of the bellows. The bearer of musk may give you some, or you may buy some from him, or you may at least find a pleasant scent from him. The blower of the bellows may burn your clothes, or you may find from him an unpleasant smell.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 5534; Sahih Muslim, no. 2628. Agreed upon and authentic.

He ﷺ also said:

الرجل على دين خليله، فلينظر أحدهم من يخال

“A person is upon the religion of his close friend, so let each of you look carefully at whom he takes as a close friend.”

Source and grading: Sunan Abi Dawud, no. 4833; Jami' al-Tirmidhi, no. 2378. Al-Tirmidhi graded it *hasan gharib*, and Shaykh al-Albani graded it *hasan*.

Companionship works through more than formal instruction.

A person becomes familiar with another's language.

He learns what that person mocks and what he praises.

He absorbs priorities, grievances, loyalties, assumptions, and habits of interpretation.

Something that initially seemed obviously wrong may become ordinary through repetition.

A speaker whom one first followed only for a narrow benefit may gradually become a trusted religious reference.

This does not mean that everyone associated with a mistaken person becomes identical to him. It does not authorize judgment of a person merely from one acquaintance or one conversation.

The detailed study of close companionship, divided affiliation, and the person who claims the Sunnah while maintaining intimate identification with innovators belongs to the separate study **Between Two Flocks**.

Here, the point is narrower:

Familiarity is one of the ways by which caution can weaken.

That is why the Prophet's teaching about companionship belongs beside the Salaf's warnings about hearing.

9. The Digital Door to the Heart

The Salaf did not speak about podcasts, recommendation algorithms, livestreams, short-form clips, private group chats, or social-media feeds.

To attribute those technologies to them would be historically false.

But the principles they transmitted apply to new channels through which the same human hearing, attention, companionship, and religious persuasion operate.

These are **contemporary applications of older revealed and Salaf principles**, not technologies the Salaf themselves discussed.

A Muslim should therefore distinguish between different forms of digital exposure.

There is a difference between:

- checking one clip to verify what a person actually said;
- and subscribing to hours of his religious teaching.

There is a difference between:

- reading a specific objection in order to ask a scholar about it;
- and repeatedly consuming controversial content for stimulation.

There is a difference between:

- a qualified student examining material for a refutation;
- and an ungrounded student spending his evenings listening to competing ideologies to “see who wins.”

There is a difference between:

- unavoidable exposure;
- and repeatedly selecting the same source until familiarity and trust develop.

Modern platforms can make repeated exposure unusually easy. A person no longer needs to travel to a gathering, buy a book, or personally seek a teacher. A disputed claim can enter his home, pocket, car, and private time continuously.

The religious principle therefore becomes more—not less—important:

Do not confuse availability with benefit.

Not everything one can listen to needs to be listened to.

Not every debate needs an audience.

Not every objection deserves residence in the heart.

Not every controversial speaker needs to become part of one’s daily religious diet.

The Muslim’s goal is not to know every deviant argument in circulation. His first obligation is to know and follow the truth.

If a serious doubt reaches him and he cannot answer it, the answer is not necessarily to consume more content from the person who created the doubt. It may be wiser to stop, return to clear revelation, and seek clarification from people of sound knowledge.

The digital environment changes the speed and quantity of exposure. It does not change the nature of the human heart.

10. Positive Protection

Avoidance by itself is not enough.

A heart protected from one falsehood but left empty of knowledge remains weak in another way.

The Salaf's precaution belonged inside a larger religious life: knowledge, worship, Sunnah, good companionship, remembrance of Allah, and dependence upon Him.

The positive program begins with the supplication already taught by revelation:

ربنا لا تزغ قلوبنا بعد إذ هديتنا وهب لنا من لدنك رحمة إنك أنت الوهاب

“Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from Yourself. Indeed, You are the Bestower.”

Source: Qur'an, Al 'Imran 3:8.

And the Prophetic supplication:

اللهم مصرف القلوب صرف قلوبنا على طاعتك

“O Director of the hearts, direct our hearts to Your obedience.”

Source and authenticity: Sahih Muslim, no. 2654. Authentic.

Protection therefore begins with humility before Allah.

It continues by learning clear revelation before becoming occupied with objections.

It is strengthened by taking religion from reliable people rather than making controversial personalities one's teachers.

It is strengthened by righteous companionship rather than constant familiarity with people who normalize error.

It is strengthened by knowing one's level. A beginner does not benefit from pretending to be a specialist refuter. A student does not become stronger by collecting doubts faster than he collects foundations.

It is strengthened by asking for clarification when a doubt appears rather than privately allowing it to grow.

And it is strengthened by remembering that the goal of knowledge is not to win arguments.

The goal is to worship Allah upon truth.

This returns us to the two lessons joined in the statement of 'Abd al-Razzaq: the heart is weak, and religion is not determined merely by whoever prevails.

The two clauses belong together.

Because the heart is weak, do not be dazzled by whoever appears to prevail.

Because religion is established by truth rather than rhetorical victory, do not place your faith unnecessarily inside contests where performance may be mistaken for proof.

Because guidance is from Allah, do not make self-confidence your guardian.

And because the Qur'an and Sunnah are clear in their foundations, protect the clarity Allah has given you.

Conclusion

The Salaf's fear of listening to the people of innovation was not a confession that revelation is fragile.

It was a confession of human need.

The heart requires Allah to keep it firm. Revelation warns about people who pursue ambiguity. The Prophet ﷺ warned the believers to beware of them. Fitna are presented to hearts. The Qur'an commands the believer not to remain passively in certain gatherings of falsehood. The authentic reports from Abu Qilabah, Ibn Sirin, al-Hasan, and Ibn Tawus show how seriously the early Muslims took these principles in practice.

Ibn Sirin did not fear the Qur'an; he feared a distortion attached to it settling in his heart.

Abu Qilabah did not say that every listener must inevitably deviate; he refused to regard the listener as secure from being drawn into misguidance or confused concerning what he already knew.

Ibn Tawus did not treat theological falsehood as harmless sound. He blocked his hearing and warned that the heart is weak.

And 'Abd al-Razzaq joined the two governing lessons:

لأن القلب ضعيف، وإن الدين ليس لمن غلب

“Because the heart is weak, and the religion is not [determined] by whoever prevails.”

The Muslim therefore does not seek intellectual isolation, but neither does he confuse reckless exposure with scholarship.

He does not abandon da'wah, but he does not rename companionship with falsehood “da'wah” when no real benefit is being pursued.

He does not forbid qualified refutation, but he does not imagine that every ordinary Muslim must personally investigate every deviant doctrine.

He does not make general Salaf warnings into a licence for injustice or careless tabdī' of individuals.

He does not claim that every exposure automatically causes deviation.

He does something more balanced and more difficult:

He seeks the truth from revelation, learns it from reliable people, asks Allah for firmness, keeps good company, knows his limits, avoids unnecessary fitnah, and engages falsehood only when there is a legitimate need and sufficient knowledge.

The purpose is not fear of thought.

The purpose is preservation of guidance.

The believer has been given something more valuable than the opportunity to hear every argument.

He has been given Islam and the Sunnah.

He should guard what Allah has given him.