

## WHY STUDY SUCH A TOPIC?

Shaykh Saalih Ibn Sa'd as-Suhaymee says,

“*Shirk* (associating others with Allaah) is the greatest sin by which Allaah the Mighty and Majestic is disobeyed, and its danger is severe, and it is more hidden than the crawling of an ant. So due to that, it becomes stipulated upon every Muslim to have knowledge of *Shirk* until he becomes safe from it, and to be upon a clear path concerning its affair, and to fortify himself from falling into it. So there are many reasons for us to study such a topic, we shall summarize them as follows:

1. The Messenger (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), who did not speak from his own desires, informed that *Shirk* shall be found in this *Ummah*, and that the worshipping of idols and the following of the ways (*sunan*) of the early polytheists (*mushrikeen*) will be found in it. Indeed many *ahaadeeth* have come concerning that, we mention from them his (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) statement, “A day and a night will not come, except that al-Laat and al-'Uzzaa [1] will be worshipped.” [2] And the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “The Hour will not be established until tribes from my *Ummah* attach themselves to the polytheists, and until tribes from my *Ummah* worship idols.” [3] And he (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “You will surely follow the ways (*sunan*) of those who came before you, hand span by hand span, arm span by arm span, to the extent that if they were to enter a lizard's hole, you would enter it with them.” [4] Indeed what the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) spoke about comes true as we see in this age of ours the deviation of some of the Muslims from their true Religion, and their accompaniment of the people of the graves and tombs, and their clinging to them and sacrificing to them in exclusion to Allaah.

2. Verily the Muslim must seek to know the evil so as to be warned from it and to stay far from it, because if he does not know it, he might fall into it unknowingly. This is proven in the statement of Hudhayfah (*radiyallaahu 'anh*u), “The people used to ask the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) about the good, and I used to ask the Messenger of Allaah about the evil out of fear that I might fall into it.” [5]

3. The present state and condition which has reached many of the Muslims today has come to a point where you will not find a country from the Islaamic countries, except that in it there is a large audience, and sanctified graves, and oaths are taken by them, and sacrifices are made for them, and aid is sought from the people in them. And candles are lighted and festivals are celebrated,

and the people in the graves are asked to fulfill needs, and to extreme distress and calamities, and it is thought that such servile flattery will bring them closer to Allaah. So here, every intelligent person must ask: What is the difference between the one who seeks aid from the statues and idols and calls upon them besides Allaah and says ‘We do not worship them, except that they should bring us closer to Allaah;’ and the one who seeks aid from the dead person in his grave, and calls upon him and hopes in him to bring about good and remove harm? The answer is that both of these things are created, so it is not permissible to join them with Allaah, and they do not even have control over their own selves. So they cannot have control over others, and what is more correct than the statement ‘The one who does not possess something, cannot give it.’ So due to these reasons and others, we must have knowledge of *Shirk*, and unveil its realities, and clarify its danger.” [6]

### A COMPREHENSIVE DEFINITION:

Shaykh Saalih Ibn Fawzaan al-Fawzaan says,

“*Shirk* is to designate an associate/partner (*shareek*) with Allaah in His *Ruboobiyyah* (Lordship), or His *Uloohiyyah* (Divinity). In most cases, the association (*ishraak*) is in the *uloohiyyah*, by calling upon someone along with Allaah, or designating for other than Allaah something from the various types of worship such as: sacrifice, taking oaths, and fear, and hope, and love. *Shirk* is the greatest of sins and that is due to the following matters:

1. It is resembling the creation with the Creator in characteristics of *uloohiyyah*. So whoever associates someone with Allaah, then he indeed resembles him to Allaah, and this is the greatest injustice, as Allaah the Exalted said, “**Verily Shirk is a great injustice.**” [Soorah Luqmaan 31:13] And injustice (*dhulm*) is to put something out of its proper place. So whoever worships other than Allaah, then indeed he puts worship out of its proper place, and he directs it to one who does not deserve it, and that is the greatest injustice.

2. Allaah informed that He does not forgive the one who does not repent from *Shirk*. “**Verily Allaah does not forgive that Shirk be made with Him, but He forgives whatever is below that to whomever He wishes.**” [Sooratun-Nisaa 4:48]

3. Allaah has informed that He has made Paradise unlawful upon the one who commits *Shirk* and that his dwelling place will be in the fire of Hell, Allaah the Exalted said, “**Verily whosoever associates partners with Allaah, then indeed Allaah has made Paradise unlawful for him, and his station is the Fire. And the**

**transgressors will not have any helpers.**” [Sooratul-Maa'idah 5:72]

4. *Shirk* nullifies all good deeds, as Allaah the Exalted said, “**And if they associate others with Allaah, whatever they have done is nullified.**” [Sooratul-An'aam 6:88] And Allaah the Exalted said, “**And it was already revealed to you and to those before you, that if you should associate anything with Allaah, your work would surely become worthless, and you would surely be amongst the losers.**” [Sooratuz-Zumar 39:65]

5. The blood and wealth of the *mushrik* (one who commits *Shirk*) is lawful, as Allaah the Exalted says, “**So kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit and wait for them at every place of ambush.**” [Sooratut-Tawbah 9:5] And the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “I have been ordered to fight the people until they say, ‘There is none worthy of worship besides Allaah.’ So if they say it, their blood and wealth is protected from me, except with due right.” [7]

6. *Shirk* is a deficiency and a problem that Allaah has negated from Himself. So whoever associated others with Allaah, then indeed he has affirmed for Allaah what He negated from Himself. And this is the goal of *muhaadah* (turning away) from Allaah the Exalted, and the goal of *mu'aanidah* (denial) and *mushaaqah* (deviation) with Allaah.” [8]

### THE GREATEST INJUSTICE:

Imaam Ibnul-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d.751H) - *rahimahullaah* - said,

“Allaah the Exalted informed that the purpose and affair of creation was to know His Names and to worship Him alone, without associates so that the people could become trustworthy (*qist*), and that is the justice (*'adl*) by which the heavens and the earth are established, as Allaah the Exalted said,

“**We have already sent our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Book and the balance that the people may maintain their affairs in justice.**” [Sooratul-Hadeed 57:25]

So Allaah the Glorified informed that he sent His messengers and revealed His books to establish the people upon fairness (*qist*) and that is justice (*'adl*). And from the greatest fairness is *Tawheed*, and it is the head of justice, and its maintainer, and *Shirk* is injustice, as Allaah the Exalted said, “**Verily Shirk is a great injustice.**” [Sooratul-Luqmaan 31:13]

So *Shirk* is the greatest injustice and *Tawheed* is the best form of justice. So what can be a greater denial than this meaning, so it is the greatest of major sins; to the extent that it is said when *Shirk* itself negates something, it becomes the greatest of major sins unrestrictedly. And Allaah has prohibited Paradise upon everyone who commits *Shirk*, and He has made his blood, wealth, and family permissible for the people of *Tawheed*, and that they may take them as slaves for themselves since they abandon His *'uboodyyah* (worship). Allaah the Exalted has refused to accept any actions from the *mushrik* (one who commits *Shirk*), nor is there any intercession for him, neither is his final supplication answered, nor is it accepted sue to his hope, because the *mushrik* is the most ignorant person concerning Allaah, since he makes something from His creation one to be called upon. And that is the utmost limit of ignorance concerning Him, as is the utmost limit of injustice to Him. And if the *mushrik* only knew the reality, he would not commit transgression upon his Lord, and the transgression is only upon himself.” [9]

### MAJOR SHIRK:

Shaykh Saalih as-Suhaymee says,

“Major *Shirk* (*Shirkul-Akbar*) is to make something from the various types of worship for other than Allaah, like sacrificing for other than Allaah, or taking an oath by other than Allaah, or calling upon other than Allaah, or seeking aid from other than Allaah; like those who seek aid from statues and idols and *awliyaa'* (close allies of Allaah), and the righteous; upon the basis that this will bring them closer to Allaah. The ruling upon this type of *Shirk* is that it is disbelief (*kufi*) which ejects one from the Religion. Allaah does not accept anything from the one who commits *Shirk* and his dwelling place is the Fire if he dies upon that, as the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “Whoever dies whilst calling upon other than Allaah enters the Fire.” [10] So verily *Shirk* is the absolute worst sin, and Allaah will never forgive those who die upon it, as Allaah the Exalted said,

“**Verily Allaah does not forgive that Shirk be made with Him, but He forgives whatever is below that for whomever He wishes. And whosoever associates others with Allaah, then he has indeed strayed far away.**” [Sooratun-Nisaa' 4:48]

And Allaah the Exalted said,

“**Verily whosoever associates partners with Allaah, then indeed Allaah has made Paradise unlawful for him, and his station is the Fire. And the transgressors will not have any helpers.**” [Sooratul-Maa'idah 5:72]

And Allaah the Exalted explained that whosoever commits *Shirk* will not have his actions accepted, “**And We will approach what they have done of good deeds and make them like scattered dust.**” [Sooratul-Furqaan 25:23] [11]

#### MINOR SHIRK:

Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan says, “Minor *Shirk* does not expel one from the Religion, but it causes a deficiency in *Tawheed*; it is a way to Major *Shirk*, and it is of two categories:

The first category is apparent *Shirk*, and it consists of words and actions. So the words are like those used in swearing by other than Allaah. The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “Whoever swears by other than Allaah, then he has indeed disbelieved and committed *Shirk*.” [12] And he (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said about the statement, ‘What Allaah wills and what you will;’ “Do you make me one to be called upon along with Allaah? Say: What Allaah alone wills.” [13]

As for the actions, then it is like wearing a ring and thread to lift an affliction, or to remove it, and like the hanging of amulets in fear of the evil eye, and other than it. If it is believed that these things are causes for the raising of an affliction, or removing it, then this is Minor *Shirk*, because Allaah did not make these to be causes. If it is believed that these things themselves remove the calamity, then this is Major *Shirk*, because that is devotion to other than Allaah.

The second category of Minor *Shirk* is hidden *Shirk* (*Shirkul-Khafee*). It is *Shirk* in desires and intentions, like *riyaa'* (showing off), and *sum'ah* (seeking good repute), like performing an action which brings a person closer to Allaah, and desiring the praise of the people by it, it is like a person who perfects his Prayer, or gives charity, so that the people will praise and commend him for it. Or it is like the person who recites the remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allaah with a good voice and recitation, so that the people will hear him and praise and commend him for it. And *riyaa'* (showing off) is when a person mixes his action with that which negates it. Allaah the Exalted said, “**So whosoever wishes to meet his Lord, then let him perform righteous acts, and let him not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord.**” [Sooratul-Kahf 18:11]

The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “What I fear for you most is Minor *Shirk*.” They said, ‘O Messenger of Allaah, what is Minor *Shirk*?’ He said, “*Riyaa'*.” [14] And from it is doing good deeds for the sake of obtaining worldly status; like the one who performs Pilgrimage (*hajj*), or calls to Prayer, or agrees

with the people for the sake of wealth. Or it is that he attains religious knowledge, or performs *Jihaad* for the sake of wealth. The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “May the servant of the *Deenaar* perish, and may the servant of the *Dirham* (forms of currency) perish...” [15] [16]

Imaam Ibnul-Qayyim said,

“As for *Shirk* in desires and intentions, then it is a sea which has not shore, very few are saved from drowning in it. So whoever desires other than the Face of Allaah for his action, and intends something other than attaining closeness to Him, and seeking a reward from Him, then he has indeed committed *Shirk* in his intention and desire. Sincerity (*ikhlaas*) is that all of his actions, statements, intentions, and desires are made purely for Allaah, and this is the pure Religion (*Millatul-Hanafiyyah*) that Allaah commanded all of His servants with, and nothing other than it will be accepted from any of them, and this is the reality of Islaam. Allaah the Exalted said, “**And whosoever seeks other than Islaam as a religion, then it will never be accepted from him. And in the Hereafter, he will be from amongst the losers.**” [Soorah Aali-Imraan 3:85]

And this is the Religion of Ibraaheem (*'alayhis-salaam*) and whoever dislikes it is foolish.” [17]

#### IN SUMMARY:

Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan says,

“To summarize what has passed, the difference between Major *Shirk* and Minor *Shirk* is as follows:

1. Major *Shirk* ejects one from the Religion and Minor *Shirk* does not eject one from the Religion.
2. The one who commits Major *Shirk* will reside in the Fire, and the one who commits Minor *Shirk* will not reside in it, even if he enters it at first.
3. Major *Shirk* nullifies all good deeds, and Minor *Shirk* does not nullify all good deeds; it only nullifies those good deeds in which *riyaa'*, or an action done for the sake of worldly gain are mixed.
4. Major *Shirk* makes ones blood and wealth lawful, and Minor *Shirk* does not make these things lawful.” [18]

#### Footnotes:

[1] **Translators Note:** As for al-Laah, then Ibn Jareer at-Tabaree related in his Tafseer (27/58-59): “They extracted its name from the name of Allaah, so they said, ‘al-Laah’, seeking to make it feminine, and Allaah is High and far removed from their statement.” Imaam al-Bukhaaree related in his *Saheeh* (6/361): From Muslim Ibn Ibraaheem who narrated to us, that Abul-Ashab narrated to us, that Abul-Jawzaa narrated to us from Ibn 'Abbaas (*radiyallaahu 'anhuma*), with regard to the statement of Allaah, “**Have you considered al-Laah and al-'Uzzaa?**” [Sooratun-Najm 53:19], “Al-Laah was a man who used to mix broth for the pilgrims.” As for al-'Uzzaa, then an-Nisaa'ee reports in his *Sunan* (2/357), that when the Messenger of

Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) conquered Makkah, he sent Khaalid Ibnul-Waleed (*radiyallaahu 'anh*) to it (al-'Uzzaa). He found that it was built around three trees, so he cut them down and destroyed the building. So he went to the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and informed him, but he said, “Return, for you have done nothing.” So he returned and found the keepers of the idol fleeing, saying: “O 'Uzzaa!” So Khaalid came and found a woman with disheveled hair, throwing dust upon her head. So he struck her with his sword and killed her, then he returned to the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and informed him. So he said: “That was al-'Uzzaa.”

[2] Related by al-Bukhaaree (9/126) and by Muslim (8/57)

[3] **Saheeh:** Related by Aboo Daawood (4/450), it was authenticated by Shaykh Muhammad Naasirud-Deen al-Albaanee in *Saheehul-Jaami'* (no. 7418).

[4] Related by al-Bukhaaree (9/126) and by Muslim (8/57)

[5] Related by al-Bukhaaree (6/615) and by Muslim (3/1475)

[6] *Mudhkiratun-fil-'Aqeedah* (p. 22-23) of Shaykh Saalih Ibn Sa'd as-Suhaymee

[7] Related by Muslim (1/51)

[8] Taken from *Kitaabut-Tawheed* (p. 8-10) of Shaykh Saalih Ibn Fawzaan al-Fawzaan, slightly adapted.

[9] *al-Jawaabul-Kaafee* (p. 109) of Ibnul-Qayyim

[10] Related by al-Bukhaaree (8/176)

[11] *Mudhkiratun fil-'Aqeedah* (p. 20-21)

[12] **Hasan:** Related by Aboo Daawood (3/570), at-Tirmidhee (3/253), who said: “A *Hasan Hadeeth*.” It was authenticated by Imaam ash-Shawkaanee in *Naylul-Awtaar* (8/257) and by al-Albaanee in *Irwaa'ul-Ghaleel* (no. 2561).

[13] **Hasan:** Related by al-Bukhaaree in *al-Adabul-Mufrad* (no. 783), and by Ahmad (1/214), and an-Nisaa'ee in *al-Amalul-Yawm wa-Laylah* (no. 995), and Ibn Maaajah (no. 2117). It was authenticated by al-Arna'oot in *Takhreejul-Musnad Abee Bakr* (p. 55), and by al-Albaanee in *as-Saheehah* (no. 139).

[14] **Saheeh:** Related by Ahmad (4/428) and al-Baghawee (no. 4135), it was authenticated by al-Albaanee in *Saheehul-Jaami'* (no. 1555).

[15] Related by al-Bukhaaree (no. 2887)

[16] *Kitaabut-Tawheed* (p. 11-13), slightly adapted.

[17] *al-Jawaabul-Kaafee* (p. 115)

[18] *Kitaabut-Tawheed* (p. 13-14)

#### For Further Reading:

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## Important Islaamic Concepts No. 2



# An Introduction to Shirk and Its Divisions

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