

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Imām al-Nawawī's Commentary

On 'al-Dīn al-Naṣīḥah'

Authored by:

The Reviver of Religion (*Muḥyī al-Dīn*), the Scholiast of the Shāfi'ī School (*Muḥarrir al-Madhhab*), the Fulcrum of the Boon Friends (*Qutb al-Awliyā'*): Shaykh al-Islām Imām al-Nawawī

Translated by:

Zohaib Azfar & Amjad Nawaz



al-Dīn al-Naṣīḥah

(55) It is narrated from Sayyidunā Tamīm al-Dārī عليه السلام that the Prophet said:

الدِّينُ النَّصِيحَةُ

“This way of life is goodwill.”

قُلْنَا: لِمَنْ؟

“We asked, ‘For whom?’”

قَالَ: لِلَّهِ وَلِكِتَابِهِ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِأَيِّمَةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَعَامَّتِهِمْ

“He replied, ‘For Allah, His Book, His Messenger, the leaders of the Muslims, and their laity.’”

This is a *ḥadīth* of tremendous importance, and the core of Islam rests upon it, as will become clear from its commentary.

Now, some groups of scholars say that it is “one of the four quarters of Islam,” in that it is one of four *aḥādīth* that encompass the core of Islam. The reality, however, is not as they claim. **Instead, the core [of Islam] rests upon this *ḥadīth* alone.**

This *ḥadīth* is one of Imām Muslim’s (d. 261/875) uniquenesses (*khaṣā’iṣ*); Sayyidunā Tamīm al-Dārī عليه السلام has no narrations from the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (d. 256/870), and he has no narrations in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* besides this one.¹ We have already discussed at the end of the book’s preface whether his title is pronounced as “al-Dārī” or “al-Dīrī.”²

¹ This statement of Nawawī’s is objectionable, given that Imām Muslim records another *ḥadīth* of Tamīm al-Dārī عليه السلام involving his fateful meeting with al-Dajjāl.

² Nawawī writes: “As for Tamīm ‘al-Dārī’ عليه السلام, then such is how his name appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. However, the narrators of *al-Muwaṭṭa’* differ in regards to its rendition. In the recensions of Yahyā, Ibn Bukayr, and others, it is read ‘al-Dīrī’ (with a *yā*) But in the recensions of al-Qa’nabī, Ibn al-Qāsim, and most others, it is ‘al-Dārī’ (with an *alif*). The majority say it [i.e., the attributive eponym ‘al-Dārī’] refers to one of his ancestors, namely al-Dār b. Hānī, given that he [i.e., Tamīm عليه السلام] is: Tamīm b. Aws b. Khārijah b. Sūr... b. Jadhīmah... b. Dhirā b. ‘Adī b. al-Dār b. Hānī’ b. Ḥabīb b. Nimārah b. Lakhm, Lakhm being Mālik b. ‘Adī. As for those who say ‘al-Dīrī’, they hold that it is an eponymic attribution to a monastery (*dayr*) that Tamīm عليه السلام had lived in before Islam, when he was a Christian. This is how Abū al-Husayn al-Rāzī

Now, to explain this *ḥadīth*, Imām Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī (388/998) says:

“*Naṣīḥah* (goodwill) is a comprehensive word meaning, ‘to seek the best interest of the advisee.’ It is among the most concise of terms and [the most] succinct of speech. In the Arabic language, there is no single word that fully expresses its meaning as this one does. They say the same about the word *falāḥ* (‘success’): there is no word in Arabic more inclusive of the good of this world and the next than it.

It is said that ‘*naṣīḥah*’ is derived from *naṣaḥa al-rajul thawbahū* (‘the man mended his garment’), because the linguists likened the act of an advisor striving for an advisee’s reform to the act of [a tailor] repairing a garment’s tear.

It is also said that it comes from *naṣaḥta al-‘asal* (‘you purified the honey’), meaning, ‘you purged it of all wax.’ They likened purifying speech from deceit to purifying honey from impurities.

The meaning of this *ḥadīth* is that the foundation of religion and its standing pillar is sincerity. This is just as how the prophetic statement ‘Ḥajj is ‘Arafah’ means that its [i.e., Ḥajj’s] quintessence and greatest part is ‘Arafah.”

Now, as for the interpretation of sincerity and its types, al-Khaṭṭābī and others have spoken beautifully on this. I will summarize some of their words [below]:

1. As for goodwill toward Allah: This means to believe in Him; to declare Him free of all partners; to avoid deviation in His attributes; to describe Him with all the attributes of perfection and majesty; to declare Him transcendent above all deficiencies; to obey Him; to avoid disobedience; to love for His sake; to hate for His sake; to show loyalty to those who obey Him; to show enmity to those who disobey

relates it in his *Kitāb Manāqib al-Shāfi‘ī* with his authentic chain to al-Shāfi‘ī, who says regarding both attributions what we stated [above]. Most scholars follow this view. Some say ‘al-Dārī’ (with an *alif*) is an attribution to Dārayn, a place near al-Bahrayn: it was a harbor for ships where perfumes would be imported from India, and thus the word ‘*dārī*’ came to mean ‘perfumer’. Some claim even Dīrī with a *yā’* is an attribution to a tribe, but such an opinion is farfetched and aberrant; the author of *al-Maṭālī* [i.e., Ibn Qarqūl] quotes it. I say: Both [renditions] are correct: he is attributed to the tribe with an *alif*, and to the monastery with a *yā’*, since both descriptions apply to him.” (see: *Sharḥ al-Nawawī ‘alā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 1, pg. 142, Dār Ihya’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī)

Him; to strive against those who disbelieve in Him; to acknowledge His blessings and give thanks for them; to be sincere in all affairs; to call others to all of these qualities; to encourage them; and to show gentleness in all the above to whomever it is possible. al-Khattābī says, “The reality of this sincerity returns to the servant’s sincerity toward his own self, for Allah is free of any need for the sincerity of those who are sincere.”

2. As for goodwill toward His Most High and Hallowed’s Book: [Then this is] to believe that it is the Word of Allah and His revelation, that it is unlike the speech of creation, and that none of creation can produce anything like it. [It is] to honor it; to recite it as it deserves; to beautify its recitation; to be humble before it; to observe its letters properly in recitation; to defend it from the distortions of those who misinterpret it and from the attacks of critics; to believe in what it contains; to abide by its rulings; to understand its knowledge and parables; to take heed of its admonitions; to reflect on its wonders; to act upon its clear verses; to submit to its ambiguous ones; to examine its general and specific rulings, its abrogating and abrogated; to spread its knowledge; to call to it; and [to perform] toward it everything else we have mentioned in the context sincerity.

3. As for goodwill toward the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: [It is] to believe in his message; to believe in all that he ﷺ brought; to obey him in his commands and prohibitions; to support him in his life and after his death; to show enmity to his enemies; to show loyalty to his allies; to honor his right; to revere him; to revive his way and Sunnah; to spread his call; to disseminate his Sharī‘ah; to repel false accusations against it; to uncover its sciences; to understand its meanings; to call to it; to approach learning and teaching it with gentleness; to honor and exalt it; to show proper manners when reading it; to refrain from speaking about it without knowledge; to honor its people due to their association with it; to emulate his character and manners; to love his Family and Companions; to avoid those who create heresies within his Sunnah or disparage any of his companions; and other similar matters.

4. As for goodwill toward the leaders of the Muslims: [It is] to assist them in truth; to obey them in it; to advise them and remind them with gentleness; to inform them of the things they may have overlooked in regards the rights of Muslims; to avoid

rebellious against them; and to bring the hearts of people together in obedience toward them. al-Khattabī says: “Part of sincerity toward them is [also] to pray behind them, strive with them, give *zakāh* to them, avoid revolt against them with the sword even if oppression or poor conduct appears from them, to not deceive them with false praise, and to supplicate for their righteousness.” This [point] applies [not only] to caliphs, but also to others entrusted with the affairs of the Muslims, like governors. This is the well-known interpretation, also reported by al-Khattabi. He further said: “It may also be interpreted as referring to the scholars of religion, in which case sincerity toward them involves accepting what they narrate, following them in their rulings, and holding a good opinion of them.”

5. As for goodwill toward the general laity of the Muslims—i.e., everyone besides the rulers—: This includes guiding them to what benefits them in their religion and worldly life; warding harm from them; teaching them of the religious things which they are ignorant of; aiding them through word and deed; concealing their faults; fulfilling their needs; removing harm from them; bringing them benefit; enjoining good and forbidding evil with gentleness and sincerity; showing compassion; respecting their elders; showing mercy to their young; admonishing them kindly; avoiding deceiving or envying them; loving for them what one loves for oneself of good; hating for them what one hates for oneself of harm; defending their wealth and honor; encouraging them to embody all we have mentioned of sincerity [above]; and motivating their hearts toward acts of obedience.

Among the early generations, there were those whose goodwill reached such a level that they even suffered worldly harm because of it.

And Allah knows best.

This [exposition] concludes our epitomized explanation of sincerity. Ibn Baṭṭāl (449/1057) writes that in this *ḥadīth*, sincerity is dubbed ‘the way of life’ and ‘Islam,’ and that religion applies to actions just as much as it applies to words. He says:

“Goodwill is a communal mandate (*fard kifāyah*): if some fulfill it, the rest are absolved... But it is still binding in proportion to one’s capacity. If the altruistic well-intender knows his well-intention will be accepted

and his words obeyed, and that he is safe from harm, then it is binding.
If, however, he fears harm upon himself, then he is excused.”

And Allah knows best.