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Calling to Tawheed is the first priority

Translated by Abbas Abu Yahya

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From Ibn Abbas (رضي الله عنه)¹ who said:

رواه ابن عباس رضي الله عنهما أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لما بعث معاذًا إلى اليمن قال له إنك تأتي قومًا من أهل الكتاب فليكن أول ما تدعوهم إليه إلى أن يوحدوا الله فإن هم أطاعوك لذلك فأعلمهم أن الله افترض عليهم خمس صلوات في كل يوم وليلة، فإن هم أطاعوك لذلك فأعلمهم أن الله افترض عليهم صدقة تؤخذ من أغنيائهم فترد على فقرائهم، فإن هم أطاعوك لذلك فأبئك وكرائم أموالهم

When the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم)² sent Mu'adh towards the people of Yemen, he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said to him:

'Indeed you are going to a group from the people of the Book, so the first thing that you should call them to is that they single out Allaah (تعالى)³ alone with worship. So when they come to know this, then inform them that Allaah has obligated upon them five payers in their day and night, so when they pray, inform them that Allaah has obligated a Zakaat from their wealth. Which is taken from their rich and given to their poor. If they accept this, then take it from them and beware of taking the best wealth of the people.'⁴

First things First

Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan said:

'Beginning with first things first, is that firstly one should begin with correcting the 'Aqeedah, by commanding with having Ikhlaas (sincerity) for Allaah in worship, and prohibiting Shirk.

Then by ordering with establishing the prayer, and paying the Zakaat, and fulfilling the obligatory duties and leaving the prohibited actions, as was the way of all the Prophets, like Allaah (تعالى) said:

¹ (رضي الله عنه) (rad iyallaahu `anhu) May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him

² (صلى الله عليه وسلم) (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him

³ (تعالى) Ta'aala (He, The Most High)

⁴ Collected by Bukhaaree, Muslim and the books of Sunnan

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[And verily, We have sent among every Ummah (nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): Worship Allaah (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) Taaghoot (all false deities, etc. i.e. do not worship Taaghoot besides Allaah).]⁵

And Allaah (تعالى) said:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ

[And We did not send any Messenger before you but We inspired him (saying): Lâ ilâha illa Ana [none has the right to be worshipped but I (Allaah)], so worship Me (Alone and none else).]⁶

as well as many other Aayaat.

‘When the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) sent Mu’adh (رضي الله عنه) towards the people of Yemen, he said to him:

‘Indeed you are going to a group from the people of the Book, so the first thing that you should call them to is that they single out Allaah (تعالى) alone with worship. So when they come to know this, then inform them that Allaah has obligated upon them five payers in their day and night.....’ to the end of the Hadeeth.

The best example is in the way and biography of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم), and the most perfect Manhaj (methodology), whereby he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) spent many years calling the people to Tawheed, and prohibiting them from Shirk, before he commanded them with the Prayer, Zakaat, Fasting, Hajj and before he prohibited them from Riba (interest), stealing and murder.⁷

⁵ سورة النحل – Soorah an-Nahl [16:36]

⁶ سورة الأنبياء – Soorah al-Anbeeyaa [21:25]

⁷ From: The introduction to 'Manhaj al-Anbeeyaa Fee Dawaa ila Allaah' by Shaykh Rabee al -Madkhalee p.7