

Tafweed

Based on the works of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan (حفظه الله)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

QUESTION: What is Tafweed?¹

ANSWER:

Tafweed means ‘relegating and entrusting something to someone’.

In this context, it means relegating and entrusting the knowledge about the exact nature of Allaah’s Attributes back to Allaah Himself.

Muslims affirm that the information in the Qur’aan and the authentic hadeeths – in particular the information about Allaah’s Names and Attributes – all of this information has a real meaning. It is not just figurative speech, with no meaning at all.

To illustrate the correct understanding of tafweed, we will mention an example of a person who says ‘The Qur’aan mentions the Face of Allaah. I don’t think this word literally means ‘Face’ – in fact, I don’t think it means anything. It is just a figure of speech.’

Then the Muslim replies: ‘As for me, then I affirm what it mentioned in the Qur’aan, that Allaah has a Face. I know what a face is – in fact, even my one year old daughter knows what a face is. But as regards exactly what the Face is like – then this I do not know. I entrust that knowledge to Allaah, because only He knows exactly what it is like. I make tafweed of the exact nature of this Attribute.’

So the Muslim affirms that the Face of Allaah literally means His Face, but that the exact nature of that Face – how big it is, what it looks like, etc – is unknown to us and we make tafweed of the exact nature of that Face.

‘So what?’ a person may ask. ‘What is all this fuss about tafweed?’

The reason why it is important to get a clear understanding of this issue is that many people who have tried to attack and undermine Islamic aqeedah in the past have used this issue of tafweed.

¹ Refer to *al Qawaa'id ul Muthlaa* pp76-77 of Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al 'Uthaymeen for more information

Tafweed

How is this? These people claim that Islam teaches that a Muslim must make tafweed of Allaah's Names and Attributes. So far so good. But they say mistakenly that the approach of the Muslims right from the time of the Companions of Muhammad (peace be upon him) was to make tafweed of THE MEANING AS WELL AS HOW THE ATTRIBUTE IS.

To put it another way – these people mistakenly say that if you had asked one of the Companions of Muhammad (peace be upon him): 'What does the Hand of Allaah actually mean?' he or she would have replied:

'I don't know what Hand of Allaah means here; I just heard this phrase from the Prophet (peace be upon him) but I don't have a clue what it means. I make tafweed of (I entrust and refer back) the knowledge of what 'Hand' means to Allaah – only He knows what it means.'

If you carefully read this statement again, I hope that the error in it will become clear. The Companions and the early and later scholars of Islam never would say anything like this – instead the correct response would be something like:

'I know what a Hand is – even my one year old daughter knows what a hand is – but as to exactly what Allaah's Hand is like, then this information I do not know. Only Allaah knows. So I affirm the meaning of Hand, but I make TAFWEED OF THE EXACT DESCRIPTION of Allaah's Hand back to Him.'

So it can be seen that making TAFWEED OF THE MEANING – saying 'I have no idea what Hand or Face of Allaah means' – opens the door to any Tom, Dick and Harry giving his own opinion as to what Hand or Face or any other Attribute means. 'I have no idea what Face of Allaah means – but I think it might mean this or that or such and such. What do you think?'

And then the floodgates open, with everyone having their own opinion – and in this way, the simple, but fixed beliefs about Allaah that the Prophet (peace be upon him) came with become a confusing jumble of different people saying different things.