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“Will The 72 Astray Groups Remain In The Fire?”

By Al Allaamah Al Imaam Muhammad bin Saalih al-'Uthaimeen

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

As Shaikh Al Allaamah Al Imaam Muhammad bin Saalih al-'Uthaimeen (rahimahullah) was asked, "In the hadeeth,

“My Ummah will divide into 73 groups all of them will be in the fire except one.”
[Hadeeth reported by at-Tirmidhi]

Will they (the 72) groups be in the fire forever or are they from the astray groups from amongst the Muslims?"

The Shaikh (rahimahullah) answered,

"The Prophet (alaihiss salaatu wasallam's) statement,

"My Ummah will divide into 73 groups; all of them will be in the fire except one",

does not mean that they all will be in the fire forever. Rather some (of them) commit bid'ah which warrants their staying in the fire, while (others commit) bid'ah which will make the servant deserving of entering the fire but he will not stay therein for eternity. So the situation will all depend on the (type of) bid'ah which is committed and the extent of the differing from that which the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wasallam) and his companions were upon."

It was then asked, "One of them will be in Jannah"; does this mean that a man from Firqatun Naajiyah (the victorious group) will never enter the fire?"

The Shaikh (rahimahullah) then answered,

"(Either) he would not enter the fire or, he would enter the fire but not remain therein forever."

It was then asked, "How do we understand this?"

The Shaikh (rahimahullah) said,

"We say for example, people (Muslims) are of four categories (with regards to this issue),

The First: *An innovator who commits a bid'ah that is mukaffirah (which takes one outside of Islam). And he has absolutely no Sunnah with him. So this one will remain in the fire, and there is no difficulty in this (i.e. with regards to his ruling).*

The Second: *An innovator who commits a bid'ah that is mufassiqah (which does not take one outside of Islam). So this one deserves to enter the fire but he will not stay therein forever.*

The Third: *A pure Sunni (Salafee), this one will enter into Jannah and does not deserve to enter the fire. And if he were to enter it (the fire) due to some other sin, then he would not stay therein forever.*

The Fourth: *A Sunni (Salafee), who has mixed both good and bad deeds. This one deserves to enter the fire but would not stay therein forever.”*