

Imam Fudail Ibn ‘Iyad ؓ

By Hafiz Abdullah Muhit, Student of Darul Uloom New Jersey

Allah ﷻ has placed guidance in a specific avenue and commands us to supplicate for it in every single prayer. Allah ﷻ says in Surah Fatihah,

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Translation: Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom you have favored.

From here we learn that it is imperative upon us to seek out those whom Allah ﷻ favored and follow their way. From those whom Allah ﷻ has favored is Imam Fudail Ibn ‘Iyad ؓ. He was one of the greatest scholars and ascetics of his time. He was born in Samarqand (modern day Uzbekistan) in the early second century of Islam and grew up in Abiward.

The Imam’s early life was turbulent. Prior to his being granted this high level, he was a highway robber. He was feared by the people. Hafiz Sibte Ibn al-Jawzi ؓ (d. 654) says in *Miraat al-Zaman Fi Tawarikh al-A’yaan* that the turning point of his life came when he became infatuated with a girl. He tried to climb some walls to speak to her, when he heard someone reciting the following Ayah of the Qur’an,

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ
فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

Translation: Has the time not come for the hearts of those who believe to humble themselves before the remembrance of Allah?

The late Grand Mufti of Pakistan Mufti Shafi’ Uthmani ؓ says in his commentary of this verse that Sayyidina Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas ؓ reports that some of the believers were found to be lacking in firmness and a hint of laziness was felt in their practices so this verse was revealed causing the hearts of the believers to be rejuvenated just as the Imaan of Fudail Ibn ‘Iyaad was rejuvenated. He replied, “Yes, of course, the time has come.” He took refuge in an abandoned house that night and overheard a group of people saying, “Indeed there is a man in front of you who is a highway robber called Fudail Ibn ‘Iyad (so be careful).” This caused Fudail ؓ to

tremble and he said, “O my people, I am Fudail. Be at ease, for by Allah, I shall strive to never disobey Allah again.” It was from this moment that the life of Fudail Ibn I’yad ؓ took a turn for the better.

He travelled all over the world seeking knowledge. In Kufah, he wrote Hadith from Imams Mansoor ؓ (d.131), A’mash ؓ (d.148), ‘Ataa Ibn as-Saib ؓ (d.136), Safwaan Ibn Sulaim ؓ (d.132), Humaid al-Taweel ؓ (d.142) and many more scholars from Kufah as well as Hijaaz. In turn, many great scholars have also narrated Hadith from him such as Imams Abdullah ibn Mubarak ؓ (d.181), Ibn ‘Uyaynah ؓ (d.196), Imam Shafi’i ؓ (d.204), and Yahya Ibn Ayoob al-Maqabiri ؓ (d.234).

Many ‘Ulama have praised him very highly with respect to his reliability as a narrator of hadith. Imam Abu Hatim ؓ (d.277) has declared him *Saduq* (very truthful). Imam al-Nasai ؓ (d.303) has said he is reliable, trustworthy, and a righteous person. Imam al-Daraqutni ؓ (d.385) has said he is reliable as well.

In terms of his piety, behavior, and personality, countless authoritative figures have attested to his lofty rank.

Ibrahim Ibn Shammās ؓ narrates that he heard Abdullah Ibn Mubarak ؓ saying, “In my opinion, there is not a single person left on the face of the earth more virtuous than al-Fudail Ibn ‘Iyad.”

Abu Wahb Muhammad Muzahim ؓ narrates he heard Abdullah Ibn Mubarak ؓ saying, “I saw that the greatest worshiper of Allah is Abdul ‘Aziz Ibn Abi Rawwad (d.159), the most fearful of Allah is al-Fudail Ibn ‘Iyad, the most knowledgeable is Sufyaan al-Thawri (d.161) and the one who has the deepest understanding in religion is Abu Hanifah(d.150). I have not seen anyone comparable to him in fiqh.”

Ibrahim Ibn Al-Ashath ؓ states, “I have not seen anyone for whom Allah is greater than everything else in his heart other than al-Fudail. Whenever he would mention Allah, or Allah would be mentioned in front of him, or whenever he would listen to the Quran, fear and sorrow would become apparent on him, his eyes would flow with tears and he would continuously cry until those around him would comfort him. He was constantly grieving and always deep in thought regarding Allah. I have never seen a man who truly desired Allah through the help of his knowledge and actions other than him. Whenever we would go out with him to a janazah, he would constantly lecture and advise us and cry as if he was bidding farewell to his companions, heading towards the hereafter until he would reach the graveyard. At that time, he would sit in his place among the dead out of grief and would weep excessively until he would stand once again. It was as if he had just returned from the hereafter, informing us about it.”

Fudail Ibn ‘Iyad ؓ was also extremely wise. Many of his priceless advises and words have been recorded.

Abdus Samad Ibn Yazeed ؓ narrates that he heard al-Fudail Ibn ‘Iyad saying, “A slave will not reach the reality of Imaan until he considers trials as a bounty, and peace and comfort as a calamity, and until he dislikes being praised for worshipping Allah.” This ties in with the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, “Whoever Allah intends good for, he afflicts him with calamities.”¹ When Muslims are afflicted with hardships, they should look past the difficulties and know that Allah is only afflicting him with hardships to test him and raise his ranks in the hereafter.

He has also narrated that he heard him saying, “There are two qualities which cause the heart to become hard: speaking and eating in abundance.” This also ties into the following Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ, “Do not engage in an abundance of speech without the remembrance of Allah, for indeed an abundance of speech without the remembrance of Allah causes the heart harden, and indeed the one furthest from Allah is the one who possess a hard heart.”²

Imam Fudail ؓ finally bid farewell to this world and entered into the mercy of Allah in the year 187 AH. May Allah allow us to learn from his life and his asceticism and may He benefit us through his knowledge and teachings.

¹ *Sahih al-Bukhari* 5645

² *Sunan al-Tirmidhi* 2411, who declared it *Hasan* as per the manuscript of al-Mundhiri.