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Original Author: Muhammad Ibn Saalih Al-'Uthaymeen

Translator: Abu Az-Zubayr Harrison

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¹ Taken from Sh. Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen's Tafseer of Juz 'Amma. [Translator's Note]

Soorah Al-Faatihah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allaah, the Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.

﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

1. All praise and thanks are for Allaah, the Lord of all creations.

﴿ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴾

2. The Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.

﴿ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴾

3. The owner of the Day of Recompense.

﴿ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴾

4. You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help.

﴿ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴾

5. Guide us to the straight path.

﴿ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ﴾

6. The path of those You bestowed grace upon.

﴿ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴾

7. Not of those who earned anger upon themselves, nor of those who are astray.

[Soorah al-Faatihah, 1:1-7]

Introduction

Soorah al-Faatihah (“The Opening”) has been named this because the Quraan is opened and begins with this *Soorah*, or chapter. It’s also been said that it was the first complete chapter to be revealed entirely.

The scholars have said this chapter comprises, in general, the meanings of the whole Quraan with regards to *Tawheed* (The singling out of Allaah alone for any act of worship), legislative rulings, rewards and recompense, the different paths the children of Aadam (Adam) take, and other issues. For this, it’s been referred to as أمُّ الْقُرْآنِ (*Ummul-Quraan*), or “The Mother of the Quraan,”² as the foundation or origin of something is often referred to in Arabic as “Mother.”

This chapter has some distinguishing characteristics which set it apart from others. It’s a main pillar of the prayers which are themselves the best pillar of Islaam after the two testimonies (i.e. I testify that nothing has any right to be worshipped except Allaah alone, and I testify that Muhammad is His last Messenger). There is no prayer for one who doesn’t recite this opening chapter of the book. It’s also a cure. If it’s read over someone sick, he or she will be cured by the permission of Allaah. The Prophet (ﷺ) said to someone who recited it over another person suffering from a scorpion sting who was healed by it:

وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ أَنَّهَا رُقِيَّةٌ؟

“How did you know it was a cure?”³

Today, unfortunately some people have various innovated practices regarding this chapter. You find some of them ending their supplications by reciting it, beginning their lectures with it, and reading it in specific circumstances as they see fit. This is wrong. You will see, for example, when someone supplicates, he says to those around him, “Al-Faatihah!” meaning: “Recite Al-Faatihah.” Others make it a point to always begin their lectures with it or recite it religiously in certain situations they deem appropriate for it. This is wrong because any act of worship must be based upon and according to what has authentically been reported to us (by way of the Quraan or Sunnah).

² Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 772), Muslim (no. 395), and At-Tirmithee (no. 3124) with the wording, “*Al-Hamdu lillaah* is the Mother of the Quraan, the Mother of the Book, and seven often-repeated similar verses.”

³ Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 2276) and Muslim (no. 2201).

Tafseer of the Basmalah⁴

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(*Bismillaahir-Rahmaanir-Raheem*)

In the name of Allaah, the Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.

The statement of Allaah, ﴿**In the name of Allaah, the Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy**﴾ contains a preposition and object of the preposition which are both actually associated with a delayed, missing verb appropriate to the situation. So, if you say for example, “In the name of Allaah,” while you are beginning to eat, then the meaning with the missing verb included would be, “In the name of Allaah, I eat.”

We say there must be an associated missing verb because a preposition and the object of the preposition, in Arabic, must both refer to an action. This delayed action or verb is deferred until after mentioning the name of Allaah for two benefits: first, to seek the blessing of mentioning Allaah’s name first and foremost; and second, a delayed action indicates that it’s restricted, as if you’re saying, “I do not eat in the name of anyone, seeking blessings and help by that name, except with the name of Allaah.”

We say the delayed missing word is a verb because action words are verbs and this is known to the specialists of Arabic grammar and for this, nouns do not apply except with specific conditions.

We also say that it (the deferred, missing verb) is appropriate to the situation in which the statement is made because the statement itself indicates the intended verb which is according to the situation. For example, Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) specified the verb when he said:

مَنْ لَمْ يَدْبَحْ فَلْيَدْبَحْ بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ

“Whoever has not already slaughtered (his animal), then let him slaughter in the name of Allaah.”⁵

Or he said:

⁴ The term “*Basmalah*” refers to the statement بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (*Bismillaahir-Rahmaanir-Raheem*) “In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy” – T.N.

⁵ Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 985) and Muslim (no. 1970).

عَلَى اسْمِ اللَّهِ

“...upon the name of Allaah.”⁶

﴿**Allaah**﴾: “Allaah” is the proper name for the Lord of all the creations. No one else is named with this name. It’s the base origin of all the other names (of Allaah) and all of them follow and describe this name.

﴿**the Most-Merciful**﴾ (*Ar-Rahmaan*): This is a name meaning the One Who is described with expansive, all-encompassing mercy. Even the Arabic root form this name is based on, with regards to the rules of Arabic conjugation, indicates a sense of expansiveness.

﴿**The Bestower of all mercy**﴾ (*ar-Raheem*): This is a name meaning the One Who bestows mercy on whomever He wills of His servants. The Arabic form of the word here indicates the occurrence of the action.

So here, mercy is one of Allaah’s characteristics or attributes proven by the name, “*Ar-Rahmaan*”. Mercy also relates to His action - bestowing mercy on the creation and this indicated by His name “*Ar-Raheem*”.

Ar-Rahmaan and *Ar-Raheem* are both actual names of Allaah with which He describes Himself. They prove the attribute of mercy and its associated effect.

This attribute of mercy that Allaah has affirmed to Himself is an actual characteristic of mercy as is proven by the legislation and the intellect. As for the legislative proofs, they are those which have come in the Quraan or the Sunnah confirming the attribute of Allaah’s mercy and there are many proofs like this. As for the intellect, then whatever occurs of favors and whatever adversity is prevented – these are only the effects of Allaah’s mercy.

Even after this, some people still deny and reject describing Allaah with a real, actual characteristic of mercy. They distort its meaning and misinterpret it to mean “the bestowing of favors” or the “intent to bestow favors.” They claim it’s impossible for one’s intellect to describe Allaah with mercy saying, “...because mercy is a swaying emotion consisting of softness,

⁶ Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 5500) and Muslim (no. 1970).

humbleness, and sympathy. Such things don't befit Allaah!" This statement of theirs is refuted in two ways:

1. Firstly, this is untrue because we even find the characteristic of mercy among the powerful kings with no humbleness, sympathy, or being overcome with sorrow.
2. Secondly, even if this were the case with the attribute of mercy and what it indicates, this is regarding mercy as it pertains to the creation. As for the mercy of the Creator, it's an attribute that befits His greatness and majesty indicating no sense of deficiency in any way.

We then say that the intellect actually does indicate the affirmation of a real attribute of mercy to Allaah (ﷻ). Whatever we witness of mercy from the creation between themselves, this itself indicates the mercy of Allaah. It is a perfect attribute of mercy and Allaah is the most deserving of attributes of perfection. More so, we also witness particular acts of mercy that only pertain to Allaah such as the sending of rain, ending drought, and similar acts that indicate His mercy.

The amazing thing is that these people who deny Allaah's attribute of mercy based upon their claim that the intellect does not rationalize it or make it possible; you find the same people affirming an actual attribute of intent or decision to Allaah based upon a similar intellectual proof. They say, "The fact that some of the creation have distinguishing characteristics specific to each of them indicates, from the intellect, the attribute of decision and will." No doubt, this is correct. However, this indication is even much less than the effects of mercy we see among the creation because noticing such minute distinguishing features is specific to those of this field. As for the effects of Allaah's mercy, even the common people notice this. If you were to ask a common, uneducated person in the morning after a rainy night, "Why did we receive rain?" he would probably reply with something like, "By the favor of Allaah and His mercy."

Question: Is the Basmalah an Actual Verse of Soorah Al-Faatihah or Not?

The scholars hold differing opinions about this issue. Some say that it's definitely a verse from Al-Faatihah and it should be recited aloud in those prayers which are recited out-loud. They believe it's not correct unless the Basmalah is recited since it is part of Al-Faatihah. Other scholars say that it's not a verse of Al-Faatihah. Rather, it's a separate verse from the book of Allaah. This latter opinion is the correct one and is proven by other texts as well as the context of the chapter itself.

As for the textual proof, Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated a Hadeeth that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : قَسَمْتُ الصَّلَاةَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي نِصْفَيْنِ، إِذَا قَالَ : ﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾
 قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : حَمِدَنِي عَبْدِي، وَإِذَا قَالَ : ﴿ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴾ قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : أَثْنَى عَلَيَّ عَبْدِي،
 وَإِذَا قَالَ : ﴿ مَا لِكِ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴾ قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : مَجَّدَنِي عَبْدِي، وَإِذَا قَالَ : ﴿ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ
 نَسْتَعِينُ ﴾ قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : هَذَا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي نِصْفَيْنِ، وَإِذَا قَالَ : ﴿ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴾
 إِنْج، قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : هَذَا لِعَبْدِي، وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ

“Allaah (تَعَالَى) says, ‘I have divided the prayer in two parts between Myself and my servant.’ When the servant recites, **﴿All praise and thanks are to Allaah, the Lord of all creations﴾**, Allaah says, ‘My servant has praised Me.’ And when he recites, **﴿The Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy﴾**, Allaah says, ‘My servant has honored Me.’ When he recites, **﴿The Owner of the Day of Recompense﴾**, Allaah says, ‘My servant has glorified Me.’ When he recites, **﴿You alone we worship and You alone we seek help from﴾**, Allaah replies, ‘This is two parts between my servant and I.’ When he recites, **﴿Guide us to the straight path...﴾**, Allaah replies, ‘This is for My servant and he will have what he asks for.’”⁷

This is a textual proof that the Basmalah is not an actual verse of Al-Faatihah (because it was not the first statement the servant says as mentioned in this Hadeeth).

There is another authentic statement of Anas ibn Maalik (رضي الله عنه) in “Saheeh Muslim” in which he said:

“I prayed behind the Prophet (ﷺ), Abu Bakr, and ‘Umar and they all used not to mention ‘In the name of Allaah, the Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy’ at the beginning of their recitation nor at the end of it.”⁸

What is meant is that each of them used not to mention it aloud. The fact that there is a distinction between it not being recited aloud and the rest of Al-Faatihah being recited indicates that it is not actually a part of the chapter.

⁷ Recorded by Muslim (no. 395).

⁸ Recorded by Muslim (no. 399).

As for the proof from the context of the other verses' meanings, Soorah al-Faatihah consists of seven verses as is unanimously agreed upon. If you wanted to measure out seven verses as they pertain to the topics of the chapter, you will find that the middle verse is:

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾

You alone we worship and You alone we seek help from.

[Soorah Al-Faatihah, 1:4]

This is the same verse about which Allaah says, "This is two parts between my servant and I." This is because the first verse is:

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

All praise and thanks are for Allaah, the Lord of all creations.

[Soorah Al-Faatihah, 1:1]

The second verse is:

﴿الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ﴾

The Most Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.

[Soorah Al-Faatihah, 1:2]

The third verse:

﴿مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ﴾

The owner of the Day of Recompense.

[Soorah Al-Faatihah, 1:3]

These three previous verses are all about the rights of Allaah (His attribute, actions, etc.). And the verse:

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾

You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help.

[Soorah Al-Faatihah, 1:4]

This is the fourth verse and the half-way point and it's even divided into two parts, one part for Allaah ("You alone we worship") and one part for the servant ("You alone we seek help from"). The following verses are:

﴿ اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴾

Guide us to the straight path.

[Soorah Al-Faatihah, 1:5]

This is for the servant.

﴿ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ﴾

The path of those upon whom You bestowed Your grace.

[Soorah Al-Faatihah, 1:6]

This is also for the servant.

﴿ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴾

Not of those who earned anger upon themselves, nor of those who are astray.

[Soorah Al-Faatihah, 1:7]

And finally, this last verse is also for the servant.

So, three verses are for Allaah (ﷻ) and they are the first three. Three verses are for the servant and they are the last three. One verse is between both the servant and his Lord and it's the fourth and middle verse.

As for the proof from the context of the wordings, if we say that the Basmalah is a verse of Al-Faatihah, then the seventh verse would be very long – as long as two of the other verses (thus making the last verse, "The path of those upon whom You bestowed Your grace, not of those who earned anger, nor of those who are astray."). And it's known that the principle of the verses being similar to each other is also regarding their length.

So, the correct opinion no doubt is that the Basmalah is not a verse of Soorah Al-Faatihah just as it's not a verse (at the beginning) of every other chapter (in the Quraan).

Tafseer of Verse 1

﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

(*Al-Hamdu lillaahi Rabbil-'Aalameen*)

All praise and thanks are for Allaah, the Lord of all creations.

﴿**All praise and thanks**﴾ (*Al-Hamd*): This word الْحَمْدُ (*Al-Hamd*) is used only to describe someone with complete perfection of self, attributes, and actions out of love and honor. So, Allaah is perfect in His self, His attributes, and His actions. This praising, however, must be with a condition – it must be made out with love and honor. The people of knowledge say that simply describing someone with perfection yet not out of real love and honor for the praised one is not called حَمْدٌ (*Hamd*). Rather, in that case it would only be called مَدْحٌ (*Madh*) (a lesser degree of praise or admiration). Therefore, this (second) type of praising occurs often from people while they may not really love the one they're praising. Often, they only want to gain something from them. Some poets stand before the leaders and recite poetry of amazing praiseworthy descriptions of them yet void of any real love for them. Their love is for the wealth they're given or they do this out of fear of them. On the contrary, our praise for our Lord is a form of praise out of love and honor. So, *Al-Hamd* is to praise the One described with total perfection out of love and honor for Him.

The الـ (*Al-*) in الْحَمْدُ (*Al-Hamd*) is inclusive, meaning that it includes all forms of praise and thanks.

﴿**are for Allaah**﴾ (*lillaahi*): The لِـ (*li*) is to show possession and a sense of deserving. The name Allaah is the proper name of our Lord (ﷻ) and no one else is given this name. It means the One God that is worshipped out of love and honor.

﴿**the Lord**﴾ (*Rabb*): The word “Lord” includes three main descriptions: the Creator, the Owner, and the Controller of affairs. So, He's the Creator of all that exists, the Owner of all that exists, and the Controller of everything.

﴿**of all creations**﴾ (*Al-'Aalameen*): As for the word “*Aalameen*”, the scholars say it refers to anything and everything other than Allaah. They're described with this word because their very existence is a sign or indication (‘*Alam*) that they have a Creator (ﷻ).

In every form of creation there's a sign indicating the existence of its Creator, His capability, wisdom, mercy, power, and the rest of His attributes of *Ruboobiyyah* (Allaah's lordship).

Points of Benefit of Al-Faatihah, Verse 1:

1. From the beneficial points we gain from this verse is the affirmation of praise of perfection to Allaah (ﷻ). This is shown by the *Al-* in the word *Al-Hamd* because this definite article in Arabic grammar is inclusive to include all forms of praise and gratitude.
2. It also shows that Allaah alone deserves all forms of praise and gratitude. For this reason, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say whenever something happened he was happy with:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي بِنِعْمَتِهِ تُتِمُّ الصَّالِحَاتِ

“All praise and thanks are for Allaah by Whose favor righteous deeds are fulfilled.”

And he would say when if something didn't please him:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ

“All praise and thanks are for Allaah in all situations.”⁹

3. Another point of benefit from the verse is the description of Allaah with *Uloohiyyah* (Allaah's sole right to all forms of worship) first before describing Him with *Ruboobiyyah*. This is either indicated because the name “Allaah” is His proper name, specific to Him and the source of all the rest of His names; or it's due to the fact that the people the messengers were sent to used to only deny Allaah's *Uloohiyyah*, or His sole right to worship; most of them did not deny His *Ruboobiyyah* (that He's the Creator, Owner, Controller, etc.).
4. This verse also proves Allaah's complete *Ruboobiyyah*, or lordship, over all of the creations due to His statement, **﴿The Lord of all creations.﴾**

⁹ Recorded by Ibn Maajah (no. 3803) and Al-Haakim in his “Mustadrak” (1/449) and he said, “This Hadeeth has an authentic chain of narrators.” Ath-Thahabee agreed with him.

Tafseer of Verse 2

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

(*Ar-Rahmaanir-Raheem*)

The Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.

﴿**The Most-Merciful**﴾ (*Ar-Rahmaan*): This is both a description and name of Allaah.

﴿**The Bestower of all mercy**﴾ (*Ar-Raheem*): This is another description and name. *Ar-Rahmaan* means the One Who has all-expansive mercy and *Ar-Raheem* is the One who bestows and is the source of all mercy. So, *Ar-Rahmaan* refers to the description and *Ar-Raheem* refers to the action. Yet when either of these two names comes separately, not connected with the other, then they each indicate both the description and action of mercy. But when joined together, *Ar-Rahmaan* is explained as the description of mercy and *Ar-Raheem* is the action of mercy.

Points of Benefit of Al-Faatihah, Verse 2:

1. From the virtues of this verse is that these two perfect names, *Ar-Rahmaan* and *Ar-Raheem*, are established and confirmed for Allaah (ﷻ). Their associated descriptions are also established: the description of mercy as a characteristic and the description of being merciful as an action.
2. The *Ruboobiyyah*, or lordship, of Allaah is based upon all-encompassing mercy and this mercy constantly reaches the creation, because right before this verse, Allaah says, ﴿**The Lord of all creations.**﴾ So, one might ask, “What is this lordship based upon? Is it a lordship of retribution and revenge or one of mercy and favors?” So, immediately after, Allaah then says, describing Himself further, ﴿**The Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.**﴾, indicating His lordship is based upon mercy.

Tafseer of Verse 3

﴿ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴾

(Maaliki Yawmid-Deen)

The Owner of the Day of Recompense.

﴿The Owner of the Day of Recompense.﴾ (Maaliki Yawmid-Deen): This verse is another description of Allaah and *Yawmid-Deen* is the Day of Resurrection.

﴿The Owner﴾ (Maalik): Regarding the word مَالِكِ *Maalik*, there are two different ways of reciting it according to the seven permissible ways of recitation. The second way of reciting it is: مَلِكِ (*Malik*) which means “the king”. The word “King” is more specific than “Owner.”

There’s an amazing point here to be taken from both of these two different recitations. His kingdom and ownership are true and perfect. And even some of the creation that may be a “king” yet not a true “owner.” Such a person is merely referred to as a king, yet has no real ownership or control over anything¹⁰. And similarly, there are many people who are owners (of something) yet not kings, like most of the people. But our Lord is the true and complete Owner and King.

﴿Recompense﴾ (*Ad-Deen*): Here the word *Ad-Deen* means recompense, meaning that Allaah is the only owner of that day on which the creations will be rewarded or recompensed (for whatever they earned of good or evil). On that day, there will be no other owner or decision-maker. Sometimes the word *Ad-Deen* is used to refer to recompense as in this verse, and other times it refers to actions (or religion) as in the verse:

﴿ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ ﴾

To you is your action (or religion) and to me is my action (or religion).

[Soorah Al-Kaafiroon, 109:6]

A form of the same word is also used to refer to both meanings in the well-known Arabic phrase:

¹⁰ In explaining this same point on his cassettes, “Sharh ‘Aqeedah Ahlis-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah”, Ibn Al-Uthaymeen mentioned the Queen of England as an example of this type. His recorded lectures of this can be found at: http://www.ibnothaimen.com/publish/cat_index_79.shtml [T.N.]

كَمَا تَدِينُ تُدَانُ

Meaning, “As you act, you will be recompensed accordingly.”

Points of Benefit of Al-Faatihah, Verse 3:

1. From the benefits of this verse is the confirmation of a true and perfect ownership to Allaah and complete authority on the Day of Recompense because on that day, all ownership, decision-making, and kingship of anyone else will vanish.

It may be asked, “But isn’t He the Owner of this life as well as the Day of recompense?”

The answer is without a doubt, “Yes,” but His complete ownership, kingship, and absolute authority will be totally apparent and realized by everyone on that day. He will ask:

﴿لِمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ﴾

To whom belongs all kingship today?

[Soorah Ghaafir, 40:16]

No one would dare answer, so He Himself replies:

﴿لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ﴾

To Allaah, the One, the Prevailing.

[Soorah Ghaafir, 40:16]

In this life, the kingship and power of worldly kings is apparent, rather some people even believe there’s no king as powerful as their own. The Communists, for example, don’t believe in the existence of a Lord of the heavens and earth. They believe that life is only deliverance from the wombs to decay in the ground, and their president or leader is their lord.

2. Another point of benefit from this verse is the proof of resurrection after death and that everyone will be recompensed according to what they earned of good or evil. This is based on the statement, ﴿**The Owner of the Day of Recompense.**﴾

3. This verse also encourages mankind to act and prepare for that day on which they will be repaid according to what they've done.

Tafseer of Verse 4

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾

(*lyyaaka na'budu wa lyaaka nasta'een*)

You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help.

﴿**You alone**﴾ (*lyyaaka*): This is a case when the direct object comes before the verb ﴿**we worship**﴾ (*na'budu*). In Arabic grammar, when the direct object precedes the verb, it gives a sense of restriction, so the meaning would be, “We don't worship anyone or anything except You alone.”

﴿**we worship**﴾ (*na'budu*): We humble ourselves to You in complete humility. In this way, you find the believers placing the most honorable part of their bodies (their faces) at the level of their feet in humility to Allaah (ﷻ). They prostrate on the ground, covering their foreheads with dirt. This is from their humbleness before Allaah. And if another person were to say, “I'll give you the whole world and what it contains, just prostrate to me once,” you'll never find the true believers accepting this because this type of humility is a form of worship specifically for Allaah alone.

The word “worship” includes doing everything Allaah commands and avoiding everything He prohibits. Whoever is not in accordance with this, not carrying out what he's commanded and avoiding what he's forbidden to do then he is not a true worshipper and servant. A worshipper is someone who obeys the One he worships in what He legislates. So, worship requires that mankind carry out everything they are commanded to do and avoid everything they are forbidden from doing. However, it's not possible to fulfill all of these duties without the help and assistance of Allaah. Because of this, Allaah (ﷻ) then says:

﴿**and from You alone we seek help**﴾ (*wa lyaaka nasta'een*): Meaning, “We don't seek the help of anyone else in worship and otherwise.” This “seeking of help” is to request the help and assistance, and Allaah (ﷻ) combines between worship and the seeking of assistance or reliance in many places the Noble Quraan. This is because worship could not be completely established except with the help of Allaah, entrusting affairs to Him, and relying on Him.

Points of Benefit of Al-Faatihah, Verse 4:

1. From the virtues of this verse is the sincerity in worship that is due to Allaah alone as He says, ﴿**You alone we worship**﴾. It shows that this worship is due only to Allaah by the direct object (“You”) coming before the verb (“we worship”) according to the rules of Arabic grammar.
2. Another point is that the seeking of help is also sincerely and solely for Allaah based on the statement, ﴿**and from You alone we seek help**﴾. Likewise, the direct object precedes the verb indicating a sense of restriction just like in the first part of the verse.

Those points being said, what if someone asks: How is it that seeking help is exclusively for Allaah alone when there has come in another verse:

﴿وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى﴾

And Help one another in righteousness and piety.

[Soorah Al-Maaidah, 5:2]

So, how do we understand these two statements when, here in this verse, Allaah confirms that seeking help from other than Himself is permissible (rather it’s a command here)? Also, the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

تُعِينُ الرَّجُلَ فِي دَابَّتِهِ، فَتَحْمِلُهُ عَلَيْهَا، أَوْ تَرْفَعُ لَهُ عَلَيْهَا مَتَاعَهُ صَدَقَةٌ*

“Helping someone onto his riding animal, carrying him on it, or lifting his belongings up to him while he’s on it - all of these are (considered) acts of charity.”¹¹

The answer to this question is that the act of seeking help and assistance is of two types. The first type is to request help while entrusting all affairs to the one you ask from. For example, you rely completely on Allaah and you realize the result won’t come from your own power or capability. This type of seeking help is specific for Allaah (ﷻ); only He deserves it.

The second type is to request help or cooperation in something you want to accomplish. This type is permissible as long as the one being requested is living and capable of doing what is asked of him. This is not considered a form of worship. This is the type that Allaah refers to when saying:

¹¹ Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 2891) and Muslim (no. 1009).

﴿ وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى ﴾

And Help one another in righteousness and piety.

[Soorah Al-Maaidah, 5:2]

If it's further asked, "Is seeking help from the creation permissible at all times and in all situations?"

The answer is no. Requesting help from the creation is only allowed when the one being asked is fully capable of what he's being asked for, otherwise seeking his help is not permissible. An example would be asking help from someone dead in his grave; this is prohibited, rather it's major *Shirk* (the associating of partners with Allaah in worship)! This is because the person in his grave doesn't even have the ability to help himself, so how could he help someone else? Similarly, if someone seeks the help of another person who is not present with him such as a person believing that someone else in the far eastern part of the world could help him with something in his (the one seeking help) land – this is also major *Shirk* because the other person isn't capable of helping him while he's there in another land.

If it's now asked, "So, is it permissible to seek help from the creation if these conditions are met?"

The answer is that it's better not to ask anyone for any help unless it's absolutely necessary or if it is known that the person would be happy to provide help. In this case, one could request his assistance in order to please him. The act that you seek another's help in fulfilling must also not be something sinful and prohibited.

Tafseer of Verse 5

﴿ اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴾

(*Ihdinas-Siraatal-Mustaqeem*)

Guide us to the straight path.

﴿**the path**﴾ (*As-Siraat*): Regarding this word, there are two permissible recitations, one with the Arabic letter س (*seen*) as in الصِّرَاط and another with the letter ص (*saad*) as it is here in the verse الصِّرَاط. The meaning of *As-Siraat* is the way or path. The meaning of ﴿**Guide us**﴾ refers to the guidance of showing and directing to the right path as well as the guidance of granting success. So, by reciting, ﴿**Guide us to the straight path**﴾, you're asking Allaah for beneficial knowledge (which is the guidance of direction) and righteous action (which is the guidance of success).

﴿**straight**﴾ (*Al-Mustaqeem*): This means the correct path with no crookedness or deviation.

Points of Benefit of Al-Faatihah, Verse 5:

1. From the benefits we gain from this verse is mankind's resorting back to Allaah (ﷻ) in that, after requesting His help in fulfilling His worship in the previous verse, they now ask Him to guide them to the straight path. There must be sincerity solely to Allaah in worship as indicated by the verse, ﴿**You alone we worship**﴾ and help must be sought in fulfilling and strengthening this worship as indicated by the verse, ﴿**and from You alone we seek help**﴾. Also, one must follow the Islaamic legislation and this is indicated by the verse, ﴿**Guide us to the straight path**﴾ as the straight path is nothing but the complete legislation with which the Messenger (ﷺ) has come with.
2. Another point from this verse is that the eloquence of the Quraan is shown in that there is no preposition after ﴿**Guide us**﴾.¹² This point is made so that the verse would contain both types of seeking guidance: the guidance of knowledge and direction, and the guidance of success

¹² The point Shaykh Ibn Al-'Uthaymeen is making here refers to the original Arabic text. The verse would literally be translated to "Guide us the straight path" with the absence of an Arabic preposition such as "to." – T.N.

and action. This first type is only the directing to and showing the straight path. Allaah guides all mankind with this type of guidance as in His statement:

﴿ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ ﴾

The month of Ramadhaan in which the Quraan was revealed (as) guidance for mankind.

[Soorah Al-Baqarah, 2:185]

The second type is the granting of success with the guidance and the following of the legislation as Allaah (ﷻ) says:

﴿ ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴾

That is the book, wherein there is no doubt, a guidance for the *Muttaqeen* (those who are constantly and fearfully conscious of Allaah).

[Soorah Al-Baqarah, 2:2]

This type of guidance may not be achieved by some people as Allaah says:

﴿ وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَىٰ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ ﴾

And as for (the people of) Thamood, We guided them (i.e. showed them the right way), but they preferred blindness over guidance.

[Soorah Fussilat, 41:17]

Here, ﴿We guided them﴾ means: We made clear to them the truth and directed them to follow it but they didn't accept it.

3. Another benefit we get from this verse is that the "path" is of two types: one straight and all others crooked. Whatever is in accordance with the truth, it is the straight path as Allaah (ﷻ) said:

﴿ وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ﴾

And this is my straight path so follow it and don't follow (other) paths for they will separate you away from His Path.

[Soorah Al-An'aam, 6:153]

Anything that opposes the truth is a crooked path.

Tafseer of Verses 6 and 7

﴿صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾

(*Siraatal-latheena An'amta 'alayhim*)

The path of those You bestowed grace upon

﴿غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ﴾

(*ghayril-Maghdhoobi 'alayhim wa ladh-Dhaaleen*)

Not of those who earned anger upon themselves, nor of those who are astray.

﴿**The path of those You bestowed grace upon**﴾ (*Siraatal-latheena An'amta 'alayhim*): This verse is connected to the previous verse and provides further clarification of ﴿**the straight path**﴾.

﴿**those You bestowed grace upon**﴾ (*allatheena An'amta 'alayhim*): They are the same ones mentioned in the statement of Allaah:

﴿وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ﴾

﴿وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا﴾

And whoever obeys Allaah and the Messenger, then they will be with those Allaah bestowed grace upon of the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous. And what excellent companions they are!

[Soorah An-Nisaa, 4:69]

﴿**not of those who earned anger upon themselves**﴾ (*ghayril-Maghdhoobi 'alayhim*): Such as the followers of Judaism and anyone else who knows the truth yet doesn't act according to it.

﴿**nor of those who are astray**﴾ (*wa ladh-Dhaaleen*): Such as the Christians before the mission of the Prophet (ﷺ) began. It also refers to anyone who works contrary to the truth, choosing to remain ignorant of it.

Regarding the word ﴿upon them﴾ ('alayhim), it has two acceptable recitations from the seven forms: one is with a ' (Dhammah) on the letter هـ (haa) making the reading عَلَيْهِمْ ('alayhum) and the other reading is the common one with a ِ (Kasrah) on the هـ (haa) which is read as عَلَيْهِمْ ('alayhim).

It's important to know that any different form of recitation that's not within the copies of the Quraan most people have, then this different recitation, even though it's permissible, should not be read among common people who may not be aware of the different ways of reciting. This is due to three reasons:

1. Even the common people, although unaware of the different forms of recitation, consider this Quraan to be something amazing and honorable. Their hearts are filled with its greatness and respect for it. If they began to hear it read sometimes one way and then other times a different way, then this may result in the Quraan being lower with them from the high status it was once given. This is only because they're not aware of the various recitations and therefore cannot distinguish between them.
2. If someone recites with the different forms of recitation, he may be accused of making mistakes and not knowing how to recite. This is because he recites in a way that is unknown to most people. So, this reader, even though he's correct, is then spoken about in a negative way amongst the majority of the people.
3. Even if a common person gives someone reciting in a different way the benefit of the doubt and believes that he knows what he recites, then such a person may begin to blindly follow the one reciting in the various ways of reading. So, perhaps he, the common person, may then mistakenly recite a way different from any of the permissible ways believing it to be one of the seven allowable recitations of the Quraan. This would then be distortion and corruption. For this reason, 'Alee (رضي الله عنه) said:

“Speak to people according to what they know, (otherwise), would you like that they (unknowingly) deny what Allaah and His Messenger say?”¹³

And Ibn Mas'ood said:

“You will never speak to any people with something that they cannot comprehend except that it will become a *Fitnah* (negative trial or tribulation) for some of them.”¹⁴

¹³ Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree as notes to another Hadeeth (no. 127).

And whenever ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab heard Hishaam ibn Hakeem recite a verse that he had never heard recited in that way before, he (‘Umar) dragged him to the Prophet (ﷺ) and informed him of this. The Prophet (ﷺ) said to Hishaam:

اقْرَأْ

“Recite.”

When he finished reading, the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

هَكَذَا أُنزِلَتْ

“It was revealed in this way.”

Then the Prophet (ﷺ) told ‘Umar to recite and afterwards again said:

هَكَذَا أُنزِلَتْ

“It was revealed in this way.”¹⁵

The Quraan was revealed in seven different dialects and the people used to recite in all of them until ‘Uthmaan gathered the people together upon one common recitation because they were beginning to differ and dispute over them. He feared that the differences would become severe, dividing the people. So, he gathered them all together upon one recitation which was the dialect of the Quraysh tribe as the Prophet (ﷺ), upon whom the Quraan was revealed, was sent from and among them. The other forms of recitation were somewhat forgotten by most people. So, if ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) did what he did to another companion, then what about an ordinary person who hears you recite in a way different from the familiar copy of the Quraan he has?

And thanks to Allaah, the scholars have always been in agreement that it’s not obligatory for people to recite in all the different allowable ways. If a person remains reciting upon one particular recitation, there’s no problem with this. So, leave the *Fitnah* and what could lead to it.

Points of Benefit of al-Faatihah, Verses 6-7:

¹⁴ Recorded by Muslim (no. 14).

¹⁵ Recorded by al-Bukhaaree (no. 4992) and Muslim (no. 818).

1. From the benefits we gain from these two verses is the mentioning of descriptive details after a general description. This is from the verse, ﴿Guide us to the straight path﴾ - this is a general description and ﴿The path of those You bestowed grace upon﴾ is a more detailed description of the path. The benefit in mentioning something general and then afterwards more relevant details is that when a person hears of something general that could benefit him, he might eagerly anticipate more details and a clearer explanation. Then, after being aware of the detailed descriptions, he is ready to accept it and anxiously hopes to obtain it. Another benefit is the explanation that those upon whom Allaah has bestowed His favors and grace - they are the same ones who are upon the straight path as a result of this grace.
2. Another thing we learn from this verse is that the blessing of guidance with which some have been favored is directly from Allaah alone; it's a pure favor from Allaah.
3. From the verse, we understand that all of mankind is of either one of three categories: those upon whom Allaah has bestowed His grace, those who have earned anger upon themselves, or those who are astray. Each of these categories has already been explained previously.

The ways leading away from the straight path are either ignorance or arrogant disobedience. The ones who were taken away from the straight path due to arrogance and disobedience, they are those who earned anger upon themselves, the head of this group being the followers of Judaism. The other group, those who've deviated from the straight path due to ignorance, they are any people who don't know the truth, the main ones among these being the Christians. However, this was their (the Christian's) situation before the advent of the last Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Now that the Prophet's mission has been established and completed, they have known the truth but in spite of that, opposed it. So, they and the Jews both have become the same - all of them are those who have earned anger upon themselves (if they don't repent and Allaah's religion).

4. These last two verses also illustrate the eloquence of the Quraan in that the expression used to refer to those who have earned anger upon themselves, مَعْضُوبٌ (*Maghdhoob*), is in the Arabic form known as the مَفْعُولٌ (*Maf'ool*) – an Arabic conjugal form that indicates that the anger upon them has already begun and is continuously occurring from Allaah and from His close allies.

5. Another point we learn from these verses is that the severest type of misguided group is placed first, then the next in severity. Allaah mentioned those who earned anger upon themselves before those who are astray because the first are more severe in opposition to the truth than the ones astray. Opposing something while being fully aware of it is much harder to return from than opposing something simply because of being ignorant of it.

In short, this is an amazing chapter and it's not possible for me or anyone else to fully encompass all its great meanings and virtues. This, what I've mentioned, is only a drop from the ocean. Whoever would like more details on this topic should refer to the book "Madaarij As-Saalikeen" by Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah.