

## From the Fountains of Imam Ahmad

Shaykh Salih Aal Al-Shaykh

The praise is for Allaah, the One who keeps a group of scholars available during the times when there is no messenger, scholars who bring those who have strayed back to the Guidance, curing their blindness and bringing them back to life using Allaah's Book. For how many have they brought back to life from those killed by Iblees? And how many strayed and then were guided by the scholars?

What great effects they have on the people! And how filthy are the effects of the people on them! They expel from the Religion of Allaah the perversions of the people of falsehood, the twisted explanations of the ignoramuses, and the plagiarism of those who have strayed, those who bear the flags of innovation and dispute over the Book of Allaah.

I praise Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, and I thank Him. I testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allaah, and that He is alone without any partners, and I further testify that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger, His pure one, His chosen friend. May Allaah raise his rank and the rank of all his family members and Companions, and may He grant them an abundance of peace.

To proceed: I ask Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, that He grants me and all of you beneficial knowledge, righteous actions, and submissive hearts. O Allaah! Teach us what will benefit us, and benefit us by what you teach us, and increase us in knowledge, good deeds, guidance, and adherence to the Sunnah! Hear our call, as You are the Most Merciful One!

Dear Brothers,

This lecture has been entitled From the Fountains of Imam Ahmad. What is intended from this title is that Imam Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal, the one born in the year 164, the one who passed away in the

year 241, was described as being like water that flowed from a spring. Like the spring that a thirsty person goes to in order to quench his thirst, he was like the spring that those who have been overcome by sins go in order to cleanse their souls. So all kinds of people used to go to him to quench their thirsts, and they would all be able to fulfill their various needs by going to him.

The people have agreed that Imam Ahmad was an Imam of guidance, the very head of the Imams of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah. They have also agreed that loving him and studying his history is an indication of someone's love for those who studied the Sunnah of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam).

The people of the past were tested regarding their love for Imam Ahmad. Whoever loved him was considered someone on the Sunnah; whoever spoke ill of him was someone of innovation and misguidance.

This is not something strange, since the life story of Imam Ahmad, from his earliest years to the end of his life, is the history of a companion of the Sunnah, someone who followed the Sunnah devoutly. His is the history of an Imam, a scholar of Hadeeth and Fiqh, a person of knowledge who spent his days and nights in acts of obedience worshipping Allaah.

### **Dedicating One's Youth to Worship**

Since his childhood, Imam Ahmad (may Allaah have Mercy on him) could be seen with signs of nusuk on him. [The term nusuk will be explained shortly.] Ma'roof Al-Karkhee (may Allaah have Mercy on him) said, "I saw Ahmad ibn Hanbal when he was a young boy, and he had signs of nusuk on him. I used to hear him making statements that were full of benefit."

This statement describes how he was upon guidance even as a young boy. He used to be seen with signs of nusuk on him. What is meant by nusuk is worship and acts of obedience. The effects of worship and

obedience are not only physical ones seen in the appearance and dress, but their effects are also found in one's speech, manners, in the acts of worship and obedience themselves, and in one's preference for the next life over this one.

Imam Ahmad said about his own self, "I did not marry until after I reached 40 years of age." His companions said that this was because he used to be busy traveling to seek knowledge before that. He went to Makkah, and from there to San'aa'. There is a story about this trip: He set out with his companion, Yahyaa ibn Ma'een, for Hajj. He said to Yahyaa, "When I finish Hajj, verily I am going to Yemen to meet the scholar of Yemen, the scholar of Hadeeth, 'Abdur-Razzaaq ibn Hammaam As-San'aanee." As-San'aanee died in the year 210 after Hijrah.

When they reached Makkah, they found that 'Abdur-Razzaaq was making Hajj that year as well. So Yahyaa knew who he was and met him. He saw him going around the Ka'bah, and since he knew him, he went and greeted him. Yahyaa said to 'Abdur-Razzaaq, and they knew each other, "This is Ahmad ibn Hanbal" So 'Abdur-Razzaaq became happy about this and said, "It has reached us that he is a person who has a lot of goodness."

When they prayed their two rak'ahs after making tawaaf, Yahyaa said to Imam Ahmad, "Ahmad, our provisions for the journey to San'aa' have been used. And here is 'Abdur-Razzaaq, so let us stay with him so we can take some narrations from him."

Ahmad said to Yahyaa ibn Ma'een, "My intention is still present, and I will not oppose it. So I will continue on to San'aa'." This shows the effects of his commitment to the hardships of seeking knowledge. A trip to San'aa' in that time was not made in cars or airplanes or the likes, rather it was only made with great hardships, the realities of which can not be described.

Ma'roof said, "I saw Ahmad ibn Hanbal when he was a young boy and he had signs of nusuk on him." In reality, this is what we should see in our children, that they work hard to correct themselves in their youth, in

their early years. Because at this, if they do not build upon this foundation with what is correct, with acts of worship and obedience, then it will be very difficult after that, except for those whom Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, excludes.

Whoever holds to His Religion in his youth, firmness will return to him. Someone being devout or obedient is not just a claim or a verbal ascription to something, nor is it something seen only from the outside. Rather devoutness in the Religion entails one taking on serious rituals, he must worship, and he must be obedient.

This leads us to the story when Imam Ahmad once hosted one of his students in Hadeeth, 'Abdus-Samad ibn Sulaymaan. When he was hosting him in his house, and it came time to sleep, he brought him some water to makewudhoo' from or for general use. Then he went to sleep. When the morning came, Imam Ahmad saw that all of the water was still there, so he asked about it. 'Abdus-Samad replied, "I did not use the water." Imam Ahmad said, "A student of the narrations who does not do anything at night?!"

He meant, "All the way to the morning, you did not pray in the night?! You did not worship!? You did not even pray two rak'ahs?!" 'Abdus-Samad replied, "Verily I am a traveler." He said, "Even as a traveler!" Meaning, "Where is the witr? Where is the prayer?" So without a doubt, if this was important in that day and time for cultivating one's soul and getting set in the proper direction, then we are in more need of it today. This is the case especially with the youth who seek knowledge, or those holding tight to their guidance, or those who display the effects of prayer, or those who are keen in doing good deeds.

One must keep his soul tied to some acts of worship. No doubt, one must keep his soul tied to some acts of obedience. If you force the soul to be obedient, it will become obedient. If you abandon it, then it will be a soul that gravitates toward wrongdoing. It has been related that the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) said (what means):

“Whoever shows enduring patience, Allaah will make him firm upon patience. Whoever seeks knowledge, Allaah will teach him. Whoever hunts for good, he will be given it. Whoever expects evil, he will be made to fall into it.”

Therefore, this description of Imam Ahmad proves that he had an upbringing based on obedience to Allaah and acts of worship, so much so that he used to force his soul to shun many worldly things and to take on great hardships. The result of this was that he established his soul firmly upon obedience to Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted.

### **Speaking Only About Beneficial Matters**

Aboo Daawood Sulaymaan ibn Ash’ath, the author of Sunan Abee Daawood, was a student of Imam Ahmad who related many issues from him, issues that are published today. He said, describing the Imam, “I have not seen anyone like Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal He never used to talk about the things that the people talk loosely about from the worldly affairs, but if some affair of knowledge was mentioned, he would talk.” To repeat the quote, “I have not seen anyone like Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal He never used to talk about the things that the people talk loosely about from the worldly affairs, but if some affair of knowledge was mentioned, he would talk.”

This attribute is certainly an attribute of the great Imams of the most pious people, those who sternly dedicate their lives to what benefit the people. The one who speaks about every affair does not have the noble silence of the people of knowledge, nor the silence of the people of righteousness.

So therefore, a righteous person whose heart is attached to the Next Life should be known by his silence when he does not speak, and he should be known by his speech when he talks. His speech is only about good things, and he keeps silent of evil affairs.

(There is no good in most of their private gatherings, except for those who order the people to give charity or order other acts of kindness, or

those who mend broken ties between people) [Translation of Soorah An-Nisaa' verse 114]

Imam Ahmad used to sit with his brothers occasionally, and sometimes with his companions and students. He would also mix with the common people as well. They would talk about a number of affairs. But Imam Ahmad would only speak if there was something beneficial to be said. The benefit could be his teaching the people or ordering them with righteousness. They said, "If some affair of knowledge was mentioned, he would talk."

In reality, this concept has been put to the test. The heart is not able to contain too many things, too many conflicting things inside a person's character. So it is binding on the student of knowledge to dedicate himself wholeheartedly to knowledge, first and foremost. He must stay away from vain talk and wasting his time. If he contemplates something, then he contemplates over some issue related to knowledge. If he speaks, then he speaks about knowledge. This will cause his life to take the task of seeking knowledge head-on, and it will give him a strong desire to study.

As a result of this, the student's speech will differ from the speech of other people. Why? That is because the student speaks the language of the people of knowledge. He lives with the Companions and their students. He lives with Maalik, Ash-Shaafi'ee, Ahmad, and Sufyaan. He lives with Al-Bukhaaree and the Imams like Ibn Khuzaymah and Shaykhul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah. He lives with the Imams of Islaam. He speaks with their words as he discusses issues with them. He is immersed in their oceans of knowledge.

Hearing everything that the people talk about, and then engaging in that talk with them, and then reading things from just anyone and passing it on, all of this has an effect on the heart of the Muslim in general, specifically it has a bigger effect on the heart of the student of knowledge.

This means that a person must make a mental note to himself that he must not allow his heart to be receptive to every single thing. Rather he

must define its course and clarify his methodology within himself, and then he takes that path. And the greatest methodology is that of the inheritors of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam), those who he spoke about, saying:

“Verily the prophets do not leave behind dirhams or deenaars, rather they leave behind knowledge. So whoever receives some of it, verily he has received an expansive treasure.”

What a great accomplishment it is for a man to contemplate about his Religion, about knowledge, about that which brings him benefit! And when he speaks, he only speaks about an issue that will benefit him in his Religion, like ordering righteousness, commanding the people to give charity, teaching, learning, and the likes. Even in his everyday conversations, his desire for knowledge is evident.

A man is raised in rank when he harnesses his eagerness for things. The soul is eager for many different things, so do not let it go to whatever it craves, force it to go after the things that Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, has sought from you.

### **Living in Fear of Allaah**

Al-Mar-roothee was one of Imam Ahmad’s companions and students, and he relayed many issues from him. He said to Imam Ahmad, “O Abaa ‘Abdillaah! There are so many people that call on you!” He looked at him and said, “I fear this may be something that gradually leads me to something evil.”

His student said to him, and he was truthful in what he said, “O Abaa ‘Abdillaah! There are so many people that call on you!” He replied, “I fear this may be something that gradually leads me to something evil.”

This kind of statement can only come from a heart that fears Allaah and is fearful of meeting Him. It can only come from one who knows that the heart changes states. It can only come from someone who knows that this worldly life is nothing, and that the Next Life is the reality.

Most of us, moreover all of us, except those whom Allaah has exempted, if it was mentioned to us that the people are praising us, or that the people are calling on us, we would be happy and cheerful, perhaps we would even be delighted with ourselves.

So Imam Ahmad said, remedying his soul, “I fear this may be something that gradually leads me to something evil.” The statement, “I fear,” shows that his heart had combined hope and fear, that he had hoped, but was also afraid. When he heard something related to a reward for his work, he said, “I fear this may be something that gradually leads me to something evil.”

He meant, “Verily, Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, may be gradually leading me into a punishment by this, testing me to see if I am delighted with myself or not. Maybe Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, is gradually leading me to a punishment,” as our Lord Himself, the Mighty and Exalted, describes how he gradually punishes some people:

(And we will punish them gradually from places they know not, so leave them to Me! Verily My Plan is strong!) [Translation of Soorah Al-Qalam verses 44-45]

So they were destroyed. Therefore, this is what is binding on the heart of the person of tawheed, the believer, that it always remains in fear. These days, the talks about the meaning of hope, they are... OK. But the people have gone overboard with it, to the point that many people rely on their hope in Allaah so much so that they have lost any fear of Allaah, they rarely fear Him.

Everyone is hoping! The rewards for good deeds are mentioned, along with the rewards for obedience. Some are working, some making ‘umrah, others are praying, some are reciting, etc. All of this is from the understanding of hope. But where is the fear? Where is the fear of Al-Jaleel, the Mighty and Exalted, may His Names be exalted? It is Allaah who described His Angels as being His Servants, and that they are not overburdened. Even their breathing glorifies Allaah, their actions are all actions of obedience, as the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam) said:

“The sky is full of sounds, and it should be. There is no space the width of four fingers except that there is an angel in it standing, bowing, or prostrating.”

All of this, while Allaah describes His Angels:

(They fear their Lord from above them, and they do as they are ordered)  
[Translation of Soorah An-Nahl verse 50]

So let every one of us examine our own selves in regards to this statement of Imam Ahmad. Where is the fear of Allaah in our hearts? We have neglected obligations, and we all know our own selves, so where is the fear? We have fallen into sins, while Allaah has full knowledge of them, so where is the fear? We have neglected the rights of others, so where is the fear?

We have neglected the rights of our believing brothers, by backbiting and slandering them, by jealousy and envy, and by oppression, so where is the fear of Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted? Let every one of us motivate our own selves to have fear in our actions! For verily fear will cause a heart to have humility, submissiveness, and an eagerness to prepare for the meeting with Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted.

This is indeed a great statement, the one said by Imam Ahmad in response to his student’s remark about how many people call on him, “I fear this may be something that gradually leads me to something evil.” May Allaah have Mercy on him, for what great vision he had! His was a great affair!

In most of the gatherings that Imam Ahmad attended, he would sit with his head between his knees. It was said that this was the position of a person of humility, one who contemplates about his own self and his future, while remaining seated in a posture that a person can not become haughty by it, nor seek to be seen by it.

When death approached Imam Ahmad, the doctor saw the excessive amount of blood in his urine and said, “This does not happen except due to a fearful heart.”

## Recognizing the High Status of the Scholars

From his other noteworthy sayings, may Allaah have Mercy on him, elevate his and our positions, and reward him with the best reward, the most plentiful and loftiest one, “Whatever the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah have detested, then it is evil.” He (Imam Ahmad) said (repeating), “Whatever the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah have detested, then it is evil.” He meant that the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah are to be referred to in affairs of what is to be considered evil and what is not.

So whatever the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah have detested in the issues of ‘aqeedah, then it is evil. Whatever the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah have detested with regards to manners, then it is evil. Whatever the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah have detested in affairs of ordering righteousness and forbidding evil, then it is evil. This means that a man must return to the scholars of the Sunnah if he wants to know about the affairs of the Sunnah, about the proper understanding of righteousness and evil.

So whatever the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah have detested, then it is an evil thing, the evil of which we have no doubt in. This is indeed a great lesson from Imam Ahmad for every Muslim, that he must follow and take guidance from the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah, those who have great concern for the Sunnah of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam).

This goes for all aspects of towheed, as well as acts of worship, business transactions, manners, education, work, and all dealings between people in the society. You must refer to the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah in these affairs. This will free your heart from your desires. This will cause your heart to be detached from what your intellect likes and dislikes. Therefore it is binding for us to be followers, for us to return often to the people of knowledge, to the people of the Sunnah for religious rulings.

For whatever the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah detest, then it is an evil thing. That means that you do not classify things as being evil according to your own opinion, nor do you get to know affairs by way of

your opinions, rather you must refer to the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah regarding the current and future affairs.

This is something that there is no doubt about, since the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah are the inheritors of the prophets and the guides to the Sharee'ah. They are the ones that Imam Ahmad spoke of in the introduction to his book, "The praise is for Allaah, the One who keeps a group of scholars available during the times when there is no messenger, scholars who bring those who have strayed back to the Guidance, curing their blindness and bringing them back to life using Allaah's Book."

Therefore, they are the ones we refer to. The affairs are not about, "Is this a bad thing or not? Should I reject it or not? Should I respond or not? Is this correct or not?" These things must not come from a person's independent judgments from his own opinions, rather he must refer these matters back to the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah.

Why? That is because these things are affairs of 'aqeedah, affairs of the Religion. Everyone claims that they understand the affair of enjoining good and forbidding evil. The Khawaarij claimed it, and thus stood up against the imams. The Mu'tazilah claimed it, and thus viewed the opposition of the imams as being a good thing. Like them, many groups claimed to be enjoining good and forbidding evil, and thus stood up against the imams. However, the affair is to be according to the judgment of the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah, and whatever they have classified as being an evil thing.

### **Loving and Hating for the Right Reasons**

From the noteworthy sayings of Imaam Ahmad about the scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah is his statement, "Love the people of the Sunnah according to the degree that they are upon the Sunnah." This means that your love should be based on the Sunnah, that you do not love for petty reasons, nor for some worldly reasons. Real love is for those who are upon the Sunnah.

It could be that a person of the Sunnah, a person of the correct 'aqeedah, does some evil things. However, due to his correct 'aqeedah, his clarity, and his submission to Allaah's Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam), you find that he is a person whose heart is free of innovation and doubts.

He said, "Love the people of the Sunnah according to the degree that they are upon the Sunnah." What is understood from this also is that a man hates the people of innovation according to the degree of their innovations. This means that if they perform some acts of worship, or they are known for their distance from worldly things, or they have conveyed some important knowledge, then they are not to be hated for these things. Rather they are to be hated because they have gone against the Sunnah of our beloved one, Muhammad (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam).

Similarly, Aboo Ad-Dardaa', may Allaah have Mercy on him and be pleased with him, used to say, "O how great is fasting!" mocking them, "Rather how great are the people who sleep deeply at night and do not fast in the daytime! How could you be so unfair about the fool and how he stays up at night and how he fasts in the daytime?! For verily an atom's weight of righteousness along with taqwaa and conviction is greater than a mountain's weight of worship performed by conceited people!"

The scholars have said, explaining these words of Aboo Ad-Dardaa', that he was encouraging the people to love the one who sleeps all night without praying, as well as the one who does not fast any optional days. Why? They said that this kind of person, upon the Sunnah with conviction, his affair is good. He said, "An atom's weight of righteousness along with taqwaa and conviction is greater than a mountain's weight of worship performed by conceited people!"

If a person is upon the Sunnah with conviction, then verily Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, will bless his small efforts. A person may perform a lot of worship, be he is haughty and self-righteous about his worship, his lengthy recitation, or his many days of fasting. He looks at the

people as if they are nothing. He does not even realize the effects of his behavior, nor does he know how his actions will be at the time of his death.

The Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) said:

“Verily a man may perform the deeds of the people of Paradise until there remains only a handspan’s distance between him and it, and then what is written for him overtakes him, and he performs the deeds of the people of the Hellfire, and thus enters it.”

“And verily a man may perform the deeds of the people of the Hellfire until there remains only a handspan’s distance between him and it, and then what is written for him overtakes him, and he performs the deeds of the people of Paradise, and thus enters it.”

Because of this hadeeth, many of the Salaf used to cry upon thinking about the book that contains what is written for them, saying, “My heart is suspended, what has preceded me? (What is written for me?)” Others, when they used to think about their final actions as mentioned in this hadeeth, that what is written for him will overtake him, they would say, reflecting over these final deeds, “Our hearts are suspended according to our final actions, what will we be taken upon?”

Therefore, when a person worships, he must worship with fear, fearing that perhaps Allaah will not accept that deed from him. Some of the Salaf said about this, “I only wish that I could offer two rak’ahs that I know would be accepted.” Why? That is because Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, says:

(Verily it is only the deeds of the people of taqwaa that Allaah accepts)  
[Translation of Soorah Al-Maa'idah verse 27]

We see here that Imaam Ahmad was establishing the relationship between every Muslim and Ahlus-Sunnah, between every Muslim and those of the correct beliefs intowheed, those who do not contradict the

Sunnah with their intellects, nor do they contradict the Sunnah with their desires.

If something from the speech of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) reaches you, that which gives details to the Qur'aan, or if something reaches you from the actions of the Companions (may Allaah be pleased with them) or their speech, then it is the truth. The scholars are those who sufficed themselves with the reports of the Companions, acted by their way, and lived according to their guidance. Whoever takes from other than this is on the brink of destruction.

### **Identifying Religious Innovations and Staying Away From Them & the Importance of Hadeeth**

From Imaam Ahmad's other noteworthy sayings, may Allaah have Mercy on him, is his statement, "I do not know any people more in need of learning hadeeth than the people in our time."

They asked him, "And why is that?"

He replied, "Innovation has spread, so whoever does not have the Sunnah, or the narrations, then he will fall into innovation."

Why would a person ignorant of the narrations of the Sunnah fall into innovation? Because innovation is something beloved to a person's soul, since the person only does it trying to get close to Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted.

An example of this is what is reported about Ibn Mas'ood (may Allaah be pleased with him). He went to a gathering where one of those present would say to the rest, "Glorify Allaah 100 times," and they would say, "Subhaanallaah," 100 times. He would say, "Praise Allaah 100 times," and they would say, "Al-hamdu lillaah," 100 times. Then he would say, "Declare Allaah's Greatness 100 times," and they would say, "Allaahu akbar," 100 times, all of this with stones in front of them to keep count with.

So Ibn Mas'ood (may Allaah be pleased with him) came to them when he was informed of this. He rebuked them, saying, "Verily you people are either more rightly guided than the Companions of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam), or you are upon a branch of misguidance! These are the dishes of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) that are not yet even broken, and his wives have not yet even passed away..." This shows that this event occurred shortly after the death of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam).

They said to him, and they were good people, "O Abaa 'Abdir-Rahmaan! We only intended good!" They declared that they did not intend except good, to glorify Allaah, to praise Him, and to declare His Greatness. And you all know the hadeeth teaching us to do this every day. They said, "O Abaa 'Abdir-Rahmaan! We only intended good!"

Ibn Mas'ood said, "How many have intended good, but never accomplish it?" He meant that a person must hold to the Sunnah in his affairs, as innovation is built upon the idea of intending good, just as those people said, "We only intended good!"

People intend good in every type of innovation that you see, like innovations in our belief for example, like denying some of Allaah's Names and Attributes. You find them saying, "We were denying such and such an attribute to establish tawheed." They were only intending good. They negated an Attribute that Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, is worthy of, something that is part of His Perfection, while they say, "We only intended good!" They only intended to exalt Allaah. The Mu'tazilah considered the negation of Allaah's Attributes to be from tohweed.

Others named their negation of Allaah's Attributes "ta'weel" and explained them as something else. What did they intend by this? They intended to exalt Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted. However, the statement of 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood applies, "How many have intended good, but never accomplish it?"

Certainly this is an important principle. How can a man be saved from this? How can someone be saved from worshipping with innovation, or admiring the innovative worship of others, or approving of their novelties in worship? These acts can seem outwardly good, they can seem to be ways to get close to Allaah. Perhaps they are acts of humility, the person may even be crying. How can he be saved from this confusion? He must have knowledge of the Sunnah, the narrations, and the statements of the people of knowledge.

One of Imaam Ahmad's companions used to sit with Al-Haarith Al-Muhaasibee frequently. Imaam Ahmad's companion said to him, "Al-Haarith is saying this and that, and he has humility in his worship, and he has great acts of worship..."

Ahmad said, "When does he visit you?"

He replied, "He visits me after Maghrib."

Imaam Ahmad said, "Then I will also come, but allow me to sit in a place where I can hear his talk but I do not see him nor does he see me. I want to hear his talk while he does not see me."

So Imaam Ahmad went and hid himself. After praying Maghrib, they sat down and their host brought food. Then they prayed 'Eshaa', returned to the house, and sat down again. They sat for a long time and Al-Haarith did not speak. Rather he sat in humility, in a way that fear, humbleness, and humility could be felt from him.

One of Al-Haarith's companions asked him something, and then he began to talk, using good manners and softening their hearts. He continued talking as some of his companions reached states of humility, and others began to weep.

The companion of Imaam Ahmad said, "Then I went to see Imaam Ahmad, and I found him crying. So I said, 'O Abaa 'Abdilllaah! What

about this talk that you heard?’ He replied, ‘I have not heard any speech finer than this! However, do not sit with him!’”

He said, “I have not heard any speech finer than this! However, do not sit with him!” Why? Because this kind of speech had not been in accordance with the guidance of the people of the Sunnah who preceded them. He was coming with a new manner of speech and a new manner of humility that had not been known to the scholars, a new style that the people before them had not known. So due to this, Imaam Ahmad was afraid that, with these new things, if they would have continued sitting with them, they would have strayed toward some innovation. Imaam Ahmad prohibited the people from befriending Al-Haarith and from sitting with him, due to what reached him about some of his other erroneous statements.

He said, “I have not heard any speech finer than this,” referring to the talk that affected the people’s hearts, “However, do not sit with him!” He said that because Al-Haarith’s style of presenting knowledge was not the way of the people of knowledge.

Let us return to what Imaam Ahmad said about that era, “I do not know any people in more need of learning hadeeth than the people of our time.”

They asked him, “Why is that?”

He replied, “Innovation has spread, so whoever does not have the Sunnah, or the narrations, will fall into innovation.” With regard to our current condition, this is something that everyone should take note of. Because, in our times, everyone loves the Religion, everyone wants to be religious and obedient, everyone wants to have humility in their hearts.

But all of this must be done according to the Sunnah, since any act of worship that is not in accordance to the Sunnah is rejected. Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, says:

(He is the One who created life and death in order to test you, which of you are best in deeds) [Translation of Soorah Al-Mulk verse 2]

Al-Fudhayl ibn 'Iyyaadh said, explaining this verse, "The best deeds are the most sincere and correct ones."

It was said, "We all know about sincerity, but what is the meaning of correctness?"

He replied, "That it is in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam)." This is the meaning of the hadeeth of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam):

"Whoever performs an action that is not in accordance with our affair shall have it rejected."

Imaam Muslim collected this hadeeth in his Saheeh.

Therefore the affairs is not simply about someone softening the people's hearts, benefiting the people, or reminding the people of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam). "This is a fine thing, it is nothing but good," the people may say. It is sufficient to reject it that it is not in accordance with the Sunnah. Why is that? Because the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam), the one we take as our example, said, "Whoever performs an action that is not in accordance with our affair shall have it rejected."

There are some actions that were invented after the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam), and they are considered innovations, novelties, and misguidance. There are other actions that were introduced after the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam), however the scholars do not count them among the blameworthy innovations. So what is the criterion that separates the two cases?

How can a person distinguish between what is considered innovation and what is not? The distinguishing factor is this: Do you see a

precedence for it in the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam), or an incentive for it in the Sunnah? If there was an incentive for it in the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam) and he did not do it, then that action is not legislated. Allaah has said:

(Today I have perfected for you your Religion…) [Translation of Soorah Al-Maa'idah verse 3]

Imaam Maalik said, “Whoever believes that there is a good innovation in the Religion, then he has accused Muhammad (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam) of betraying the trust of the message.” And the refuge is only with Allaah.

Therefore, as long as there was an incentive to do the action in the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam), and in the time of the Companions, then this proves that performing the action is an innovation. Why is that? Because the incentive was present in his time, in ours, and in the times between.

So this action, if it was something legislated, then it would have been legislated in the time of the Prophethood. So since it was not legislated in the time of the Prophethood, this shows it is a misguided innovation.

As for the second category (of things introduced into the Religion), they are those actions that did not have an incentive for them in the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam), there was nothing warranting these actions. Let us look at some examples of both the first and second categories.

To mention something well known, the first category would include the various innovative parties and gatherings, like celebrating the night of Al-Israa’ and Al-Mi’raaj, the night of Al-Badr, or the birthday of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam), and this is the most serious of them.

What is the goal behind all of these celebrations? The intention behind them is to instill a love for the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam) in the souls of the people, and to let people hear the history of the Messenger (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam), so that they will love him. These intentions are all good.

But weren't these incentives present in the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam)? The people in the time of the Companions and the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam), all the Companions, all the Bedouins, all the people around Al-Madeenah, weren't they all in need of reflecting? Didn't they all need to love Al-Mustafaa (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam)? They were in need of that.

Then why was that action not done? No doubt, abandoning certain actions is from the Religion. Just as receiving an order and obeying it is from the Religion, to avoid doing something that had an incentive in the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam) is also from the Religion. Otherwise, there would exist some things in our Religion that get us closer to Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, that our Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam) did not convey to us.

The second category includes actions that have incentives that came after the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam), and there was no incentive to perform that action in the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam), or something preventing it from being done.

An example of this is the compilation of the Qur'aan into one book. Another example is Taraaweeh Prayer. The Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam) prayed with them some nights, and then left it off, fearing that it may be taken as an obligation by the people. So when he passed away (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam) and the time of 'Umar came (may Allaah be pleased with him), there was no longer anything preventing them from the action.

As for the compilation of the Qur'aan into one book, the Qur'aan was still coming down in the time of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa

sallam). So if it had been compiled into one book during his lifetime, then every time a new verse was revealed, they would have had to add it into the sides or bottoms of the pages, thus the mus-haf would be in disarray.

Or they would have had to rewrite the mus-haf every time Allaah revealed a verse, as Allaah orders the affairs however he likes, they would have had to keep rewriting the mus-haf. For this reason, Aboo Bakr (may Allaah be pleased with him), began the compilation of the Qur'aan into one book after the death of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhe wa sallam).

Therefore, what a great piece of advice Imaam Ahmad (may Allaah be pleased with him) left for us! From his advice about sticking to the Sunnah, he said, "I do not know any people more in need of learning hadeeth than the people of our time." When they asked him why, he said, "Because innovation has spread."

So if that was just about innovation in teaching styles and manners, then what about those that are related to affairs of belief? For example, what about issues of leadership, issues of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, issues of obeying the rulers and not opposing the leaders, and the likes?

Many people have contradicted the Sunnah in these affairs and followed their opinions. So for this reason, what a great need we are in for the Sunnah! Reflect over what Imaam Ahmad said in the end of this statement, "So whoever does not have the narrations will fall into innovation."

So whoever holds to the Sunnah and submits to the narrations, then Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, will protect him from the newly invented matters by His Bounty and Generosity.

## Praying at Night

One of Imaam Ahmad's students, 'Abdus-Samad ibn Sulaymaan, said something that I mentioned earlier in this lecture, "I stayed with Ahmad ibn Hambal. He left for me a container of water. In the morning he found that I had not used it. He said, 'A companion of the narrations, and he has no activity in the night?!' I told him, 'I am a traveler.' He replied, 'Even as a traveler!'"

This is an outstanding lesson from Imaam Ahmad! The student of knowledge must keep himself upon some rites of worship, he must have an eagerness to get close to Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic.

How will he memorize the Sunnah? How will he gain knowledge? How will he learn? How will he gain understanding? How will he comprehend the meanings of the Qur'aan? How will he understand its explanation? How will he memorize the Qur'aan when he does not keep himself firm upon acts of worship and obedience?

He must dedicate himself specifically to praying at night, with whatever is easy for him. Allaah says:

(Stand the night except for a little) [Translation of Soorah Al-Muzzammil verse 2]

Then, Allaah the Exalted says in the last part of the same chapter:

(Then recite from the Qur'aan what is easy) [Translation of Soorah Al-Muzzammil verse 20]

This means that you stand for a time that is easy on you, even if it is only three rak'ahs. Stand for whatever is easy for you.

It can not be that the norm for the student of knowledge is that he does not pray tahajjud at night, that he does not dedicate himself to some worship. The righteous man, the one who seeks to correct himself,

must have a special concern for this great act of worship, standing in the night.

Praying at night is one thing. These days we need to talk about something even more serious. We have to talk about offering the Fajr Prayer in congregation! If the people of the past were advised to take care of their prayers at night, then where are we in these times when many of the people who ascribe to righteousness can not even master praying the Fajr Prayer in congregation!

Then how will our affair be, and what should we be talking about? No doubt the affair is not easy, so let every one of us inspect our own selves. Let us repent sincerely, without delay, from every sin. If we have been negligent of our duties, then repentance is obligatory. If we have been negligent of recommended things, then a person renews his commitment to seek Allaah's great Bounties.

Allaah the Exalted has described the people of taqwaa:

(Verily the pious will be in gardens and springs, receiving what Allaah has given them, verily they used to do good works before that, they used to sleep little at night, and they used to seek forgiveness in the morning) [Translation of Soorah Ath-Thaariyaat verses 14-18]

Al-Hasan Al-Basree (may Allaah have Mercy on him) spoke about these two verses (They used to sleep little at night, And they used to seek forgiveness in the morning), with some very remarkable comments. He said, "They stood the night praying, and when the early morning came they sought forgiveness, fearing that their prayers would not be accepted from them."

These are the kinds of statements that come from those who have live hearts. We may have no part in the affair except to convey the narration, as the ones who we narrate to may be more receptive and understanding of them than the narrator.

## Memorizing the Quran

From the noteworthy sayings of Imam Ahmad (may Allaah have Mercy on him) is his statement, “Azeezun ‘alayya that the dunyaa melts the hearts of men whose chests comprehend the Quran!” He said (repeating), “It is hard for me to accept that the dunyaa could melt the hearts of men whose chests comprehend the Quran.”

If a man is able to carry (memorize) the Quran with him by heart, then verily Allaah has given him a great bounty indeed. On the Day of Judgment it will be said to the recitor of the Quran: “Read, ascend, and recite with rhythm as you used to recite rhythmically in the dunyaa! For verily your place will be determined by the last verse you recite.”

The one who memorizes the Quran is the most deserving of the people to be obedient. The one who memorizes the Quran is the most deserving of the people to possess humility. He is the most deserving of the people to be one who strives hard for Paradise and flees from the Hellfire. The one who memorizes the Quran is the most deserving of the people to not be swept under by the dunyaa.

This is why the imam (may Allaah have Mercy on him) said, “Azeezun ‘alayya that the dunyaa melts the hearts of men whose chests comprehend the Quran!” For the person of understanding, which is better - the dunyaa or the Quran? Is there anything comparable to it? Is there anything similar?

Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, has said in Soorah Yoonus:

(Say: Let them rejoice over Allaah’s Bounty and His Mercy, As it is better than everything they gather!) [Translation of Soorah Yoonus verse 58]

Ibn Abee Haatim reported a story in explanation of this verse, saying:

When the camels that people paid their zakaat with arrived, one of 'Umar's servants (may Allaah be pleased with him) said, 'O Commander of the Believers! Could we take a look at the camels of zakaat?' So they went to see the camels that were kept caged in the outskirts of Al-Madeenah.

When they saw the camels, the servant became fascinated by their great number and said, 'O Commander of the Believers! This is Allaah's Bounty and His Mercy!' 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) looked at him and said, "You have lied! Allaah's Bounty and His Mercy is the Quran! (Say: Let them rejoice over Allaah's Bounty and His Mercy, As it is better than everything they gather! ) Rather these camels are what the people gather!"

Rarely could the dunyaa melt the one who memorizes the Quran, learns its explanation, has a special relationship with it, prays with it, or leads the people in prayer with it. Rarely could he be someone who follows his desires! Rarely could he slip into doubts or fall victim to his lusts! Rarely could the one who memorizes the Quran, the one known by the Quran, be a person of disobedience and neglect while Allaah has honored him by causing his heart to contain the Speech of Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted.

What a great statement! He was grieving, "Azeenun 'alayya," meaning it is a great burden on him, "That the dunyaa melts the hearts of men whose chests comprehend the Quran."

What is the dunyaa anyway with its lofty status? What is the dunyaa with all its wealth and women? What is the dunyaa and everything in it compared to the Speech of Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted?!

The Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam) described the two rak'ahs before the Fajr Prayer:

"The two rak'ahs of Fajr are better than the dunyaa and everything in it."

This is for the one who understands the reality of the Religion and the reality of the return to Allaah.

## Seeking Knowledge Until Death

Imam Ahmad had two sons, ‘Abdullaah and Saalih. They were half-brothers, meaning that each of them had a different mother. Saalih, the son of Imam Ahmad, said, “A man saw my father carrying a mih-barah.” A mih-barah was a wooden inkwell that students used to carry along with their pens.

He said, “A man saw my father was carrying amih-barah, and said, ‘O Abaa ‘Abdillaah!’ Look at how the all the people were fascinated by him, even the elders of the people! He said, “O Abaa ‘Abdillaah! You have reached this position, you are the imam of the Muslims!” He had a problem seeing Imam Ahmad carry his mih-barah as the young students would carry it, or that he would still read books or shoulder the same responsibilities that the youth did.

Imam Ahmad replied with a statement that nullified this man’s whole understanding. He said, “With the mih-barah all the way to themaq-barah (the graveyard).” What did he mean? He meant, “I will be busy with knowledge until I die.”

Another narration mentions that he said it at another occasion to another group of people. “As for me,” he said, “I will seek knowledge until I am placed in the grave.”

When the time of his death came near, he said to those around him, “Get me the hadeeth of Hushaym.” So they told him the hadeeth. This Hushaym was Hushaym ibn Basheer, Imam Ahmad’s first teacher. He met him in the year 179, when he began seeking knowledge at the age of 16.

He was between 15 and 16, as he was born in the year 164 and began seeking knowledge in 179.

So they read the hadeeth. It mentioned that Ibn Seereen used to dislike a person groaning from pain. At that time, Imam Ahmad had become very ill and he used to groan due to the pain.

When they informed him that Ibn Seereen used to dislike groaning, he did not groan again until he died.

This is the reality of his statement, “I will seek knowledge until I am placed in the grave.” Meaning, “I must continue benefiting from knowledge.” So if you have left your youth behind and become a teacher or an educator, or a lecturer or professor in the university, or an author, and you say, “I have finished seeking knowledge…” This is the situation of someone who does not know the reality of the affair.

Al-'Ilm is knowledge of what? It is knowledge of the Speech of Allaah and the speech of His Messenger (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam). Has anyone reached a level of awareness of the meanings of the Speech of Allaah and His Messenger (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam), and also the statements of the scholars explaining the Book and the Sunnah, a level of awareness that is sufficient?

No one has reached that level! No one who has the right intention and a proper heart has reached that level. Regarding this, Imam Ahmad said, “With the mih-barah all the way to the maq-barah.” He was addressing everyone, advising us to continue seeking knowledge and not to give it up for any petty reason.

In the study circles of our masjids we have seen a great number of students who are eager to learn for two months, and then they abandon it. Three months or so only. What is this?! Some of them seek knowledge for 3, 4, 5, or 7 years and then they abandon it.

Why is that? Is it because the dunyaa has come to you, so you are finished and now you head off into the dunyaa? Is it because a position was offered to you and you took it? Is it because you have reached a certain status, you have become a school director or professor in the university? For this you stop seeking knowledge? No! You must

continue seeking knowledge until you die. This is what will correct the society's problems, if their scholars take this advice. As for the students of knowledge, then they must hold fast to this advice, "With the mih-barah all the way to themaq-barah." He must stay with his book until he dies, reading, learning, memorizing, reviewing, teaching, until his end.

What are the people saying these days? The rulings related to prayer, we know them, no problem. If you asked them about many of the rulings, you will find that they actually **do not** know them. Why is that? It is because they have become satisfied with the knowledge they have, even delighted that they have the knowledge they have. We ask Allaah that He excuses us and that He is pleased with us.

If you asked them about affairs even greater than the prayer, issues of 'aqeedah, issues of towheed, you will find that they have not fully grasped the issues, and they used to be students of knowledge! Why is that? Because they were negligent, and thus abandoned it. Knowledge is honor, if you abandon it, it will abandon you. If you take the task seriously, you will be given some of it, from what Allaah has decreed for you.

### **Seeking Safety and Good Health When Supplicating**

Al-Khallaal was a student of Imam Ahmad. I tried to bring a statement from each one of Imam Ahmad's students who narrated something noteworthy, so if I did not fully accomplish this, then know that his history was rich, his sayings were many, and his school deserves that you study it and reflect over it. You will find that he was truly the imam of Ahlus-Sunnah in his speech and actions.

Al-Khallaal said, "I heard Ahmad ibn Hanbal saying, 'I had memorized the Quran. Then when I began seeking the narrations, I became busy.'" When he began seeking and memorizing the narrations, he became too busy to keep track of the Quran, and forgot some of it due to his occupation with the narrations.

“I had memorized the Quran,” said Imam Ahmad, “But when I began seeking the narrations, I became too busy for it, and it got away from me. So I asked Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, to grant me its memorization, but I did not add, ‘in safety and good health.’”

He said, “O Allaah! Grant me the memorization of the Quran,” without adding, “In safety and good health.” He was saying that what is more befitting is to ask, “O Allaah! Grant me the memorization of the Quran in safety and good health.”

He said, “So then I did not memorize the Quran until I was shackled in prison. If you ask Allaah for something, ask for it in safety and good health.”

Firstly, the imprisonment of Imam Ahmad was something that assisted and benefited the Sunnah. It was something that made the truth prevail, it made the ‘aqeedah of the Salaf prevail during a time when the people were being tried by those who claimed that the Quran was a something created.

So he was jailed in the way of the Sunnah, and he benefited the people greatly, as he guided the people to the Sunnah of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam) and the correct belief regarding the Quran not being created.

Even though he was imprisoned for this great reason, prison is still not a place of safety or good health. Imam Ahmad said, “I did not say, ‘in safety and good health.’ I asked Allaah to allow me to memorize the Quran, and I did not add, ‘in safety and good health.’ So I did not memorize it until I was in prison and in chains.”

Without a doubt this is a great statement, showing that a man must think throughout his supplications and always ask Allaah to pardon him and cause him to be in safety and good health.

So if you seek something from your Lord, the Mighty and Exalted, then ask Him to grant you safety and good health, since you do not know what is going to happen.

Perhaps you may not receive what you ask for except at a time when a sickness has made you bedridden. Perhaps you will not receive what you ask for except after you have lost your children and family and you are sitting alone in your house. Perhaps you will not receive what you ask for except after being exiled from your homeland, something that you are not happy about and you did not choose it. So therefore, always ask Allaah to give you what you ask for in a state of safety and good health.

Similarly, we should seek refuge in Allaah from trials, trials that cause people to go astray. So a person should include in his supplications that Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, keeps these trials away from him.

The scholars have said that what is best is to seek refuge in Allaah from the trials that lead people astray. The supplicant should say, "O Allaah! I seek refuge in you from the trials that lead people astray!" or "O Allaah! I seek refuge in you from being tried in my Religion!" or the likes.

This is because even good things are trials, the family is a trial, and money is a trial. These are things that a person must deal with - He has to get married, he is going to have children, he has to have money, etc. These trials are good things in their origins, but they may cause some people to go astray. So a person must seek refuge in Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, from all trials that may lead one astray.

### **The Effect of Knowledge on One's Writings**

'Abdullaah, the son of Imam Ahmad, said, "A baby was born to my father. 'Abdul-A'laa gave me a letter of congratulations to give to my father." 'Abdul-A'laa was one of the scholars of hadeeth at that time. "He read it," continued 'Abdullaah, "And then tossed it aside."

“This is not the writing of a scholar, nor a muhaddith (hadeeth narrator),” said Imam Ahmad, “This is the merely the writing of an average writer.”

Imam Ahmad was teaching his son a lesson, detesting what this scholar wrote, as no knowledge could be felt in his writing.

In reality, this is also something we complain of in this day and time. The language of the people of knowledge in letters of correspondence, letters of congratulations, etc. has been lost, or the very least we can say is that there is not enough concern to use it.

What is binding on the scholar, the student of knowledge, and the teacher is that his knowledge should make a presence in what he writes, even in simple letters of congratulation. He must not write like newspaper columnists, nor like common people, nor people engulfed in this worldly life, rather he must convey himself in a befitting way in his speech as well as his writings.

So when ‘Abdul-A’laa failed to write in this way, Imam Ahmad tossed his letter aside, saying, “This is not the writing of a scholar, nor a muhaddith. This is the merely the writing of an average writer.” By its style, the letter was not something to be expected from a person of knowledge. The style of the people of knowledge contains supplications and narrations from the Sunnah while presenting the focus of the letter, as well as some additional benefits that would be appropriate.

### **Humbling Oneself and Rejecting Popularity**

The last point of guidance that we will take from the fountains of Imam Ahmad that do not dry up, is the statement of Muhammad ibn Hasan ibn Haaron, “I saw that when Aboo ‘Abdillaah walked the streets, he hated that someone would walk behind him.”

Furthermore, ‘Abdullaah, the son of Imam Ahmad, said, “When he went out to Jumu’ah Prayer, my father would not allow anyone to follow behind him, and he used to stop until the people following him would pass him up.”

Why was that? Because this is a trial for the one being followed, and a form of humiliation to the follower. Imam Ahmad knew that, if someone followed him, he would benefit, either from his supplications, or perhaps he would ask a question, but, from his keenness to remedy his own soul, he disliked to be tested by having a group of people following behind him.

A simple affair from something everyone does - He would not be pleased with anyone following him, rather he loved to walk by himself. He was so keen on keeping himself pure, by going out to the prayer and returning to his house alone.

These manners will help everyone who has been tested by Allaah with a following of people, whether the people look up to him because of knowledge, status, or even worldly things. He must humble himself and not assist the Devil in destroying his own self.

He must shun all avenues leading to this. If he sees within himself any amazement or pride about himself, or that he sees himself as being great, then he must lower himself and be humble so that he can set himself straight. This is because pride is a huge thing, one of the major sins.

The Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhe wa sallam) said:

“The one who has even the smallest particle of pride in his heart will not enter Paradise.”

This is what is binding on all those that the people follow, that they know this is a test from Allaah and they dedicate themselves to lowering themselves and having humility. And those who follow them

should be careful as well, they should not go against someone trying to work by this advice.

So if a person finds a scholar trying to be humble like this, then let him be easy on him. Let him benefit from him in any environment he finds him in, at study circles, in classrooms, etc., however, he must not follow him to every place as he may detest that. Every sincere scholar dedicated to the education of the people hates to have the people follow him, and he hates that they say great things about him, since praise is something that he fears will affect his heart.

Ibn Mas'ood said, advising his students, prohibiting them from following him, "This is a belittlement of the followers and a trial for the one being followed."

## **Conclusion**

I ask Allaah, the Mighty and Exalted, to make me and all of you from those who strive for piety, those who push themselves against what their desires crave. I ask Allaah, the Glorified One, to reward the imam of Ahlus-Sunnah, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the best reward for how much we have gained from him. For verily he was to the people of his time as Aboo Bakr (may Allaah be pleased with him) was to the people of his time. As the people faced the apostates in the time of Aboo Bakr, they faced the evil trial of those who tried to introduce the idea of the Quran being something created, as well as other trials that led many astray, in the time of Imam Ahmad. As the first group had Aboo Bakr, the latter had Imam Ahmad to make them firm, by Allaah's Bounty and His Blessing.

O Allaah! Reward the imams of Islaam and the scholars of the Religion with the best reward for the great amount of knowledge and beneficial guidance we have inherited from them! O Allaah! Make us from those guided by your Prophet, those who are made firm by his Sunnah, those who tread the path of the Companions of your Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhe wa sallam)!

O Allaah! Grant us firmness upon the Sunnah and good closing deeds!  
O Allaah! Make us firm upon what you are pleased with until we meet you while you are pleased with us!

O Allaah! Give us good closing actions! O Allaah! Give us shelter from the lowliness of this life, and from the punishment of the Hereafter! O Allaah! I seek refuge in you from slipping into disobedience or from being made to slip into disobedience, from going astray or being led astray by others, from oppressing or being oppressed, from behaving ignorantly or having others behave ignorantly to us!

O Allaah! Correct those who are in charge of our affairs, and grant them success doing what you love and are pleased with, and make us and them from those who cooperate upon righteousness and piety.

And may Allaah raise the rank of our Prophet Muhammad and grant him peace.

Source: [www.bakkah.net](http://www.bakkah.net)