

Seeking Knowledge until Death

﴿ طلب العلم حتى المات ﴾

[English – إنجليزي]

2011 - 1432

IslamHouse.com

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the All-Merciful, may His salâh and salâm be upon His Final Messenger.

Imâm Ahmad had two sons, 'Abdullâh and Sâlih, whom were half-brothers. Sâlih relates that

"A man saw my father carrying a mihbarah (a wooden inkwell that students used to carry along with their pens) and said, 'O Abâ 'Abdillâh! You are the Imâm of the Muslims!' "

This man spoke like this since he was surprised to see Imâm Ahmad carrying his mihbarah as the young students would carry it, or indeed

that he would still read books, or shoulder the same responsibilities that the youth did. Note also how all the people were fascinated by

him (by Imâm Ahmad), even the elders of the people!

Imâm Ahmad replied with a statement that nullified this man's whole understanding. He said:

"I will be with the mihbarah all the way to the maqbarah (graveyard)."

What did he mean? He meant, "I will be busy with knowledge until I die." Another narration mentions that he said this same statement on a separate occasion to another group of people:

"As for me, 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:

"Relate to me the statement of Hushaym." (Hushaym was Hushaym ibn Bashîr, Imâm Ahmad's first teacher. He met him in the year 179AH, when he began seeking knowledge at the age of 16) So they read to him what he had requested. This narrated tradition mentioned that Ibn Sîrîn used to dislike a person groaning from pain. At that time, Imâm Ahmad had become very ill and he used to groan due to the pain yet when they informed him that Ibn Sîrîn used to dislike groaning at such a time, 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," know that this is the situation of someone who does not know the reality of his affairs.

Al-'Ilm is knowledge of what? It is knowledge of the Speech of Allah and the speech of His Messenger, peace be upon him. Has anyone

reached a level of awareness of the meanings of the Speech of Allah and His Messenger, peace be upon him, 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, Imâm Ahmad said, "With the mihbarah all the way to the maqbarah." 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 mosques 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 lure of the world has come to you, so you are finished and now you head off into the world? 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 reason you have stopped 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 mihbarah all the way to the maqbarah."

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 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 Allah that He excuses us and that He is pleased with us.

If you asked them about affairs even greater than the prayer, issues of creed, issues of tawhîd, 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 Allah has decreed for you.

From the Life and Works of al-Imâm Ahmad

From a lecture by Shaykh Salih alish-Shaykh