

TRANSLATION

Speech of Shaikh
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In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Your Royal Highness, Prince Sultan Ibn Abd Al-Aziz,
Your Royal Highnesses,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

Praise to Allah for revealing the Truth and guiding us by its light, and for making us believers and followers of His Messenger.

I have been exploring the horizons of the Prophet's Sunnah for the past 50 years. During that period, I have tried, as rigorously as I could, to reach its original sources, walk its tortuous paths, dive into its depths, and write about it.

Of all my books, most of which deal with the study, editing, verification, and authentication of the Prophet's Hadith (Sayings), the closest to my heart are two series, one dealing with the correct hadiths and the other with the weakly supported hadiths. These two series, which I hope are of some value to students of Hadith, are regularly, though rather infrequently, revised and re-published.

Notwithstanding the long years I have spent studying Hadith, I still consider myself a beginner in that immensely rich aspect of religious studies - thanks to the tremendous wealth of information and resources that have been revealed during recent times as a result of the discovery and publication of numerous old manuscripts.

That is why I revise my books from time to time and modify and sometimes even reverse my earlier judgment on the authenticity of a particular hadith. This might give the impression that I am contradicting myself, but this is not true. The truth is that as new information becomes available, such modifications and reversals become inevitable. Withholding the truth about any of the Prophet's

hadiths is a serious offense in religion and a betrayal of the Prophet, which is strictly forbidden by Allah.

The Prophet's Sunnah is next only to the Holy Quran as a source of Islamic laws and is the primary reference to the interpretation of the Quran. For these reasons, it is extremely important to identify and expose the attempts of some enemies of Islam to mutilate and modify the Sayings of the Prophet of Islam, to serve their own purposes or to throw doubt on the authenticity of hadiths and that of their narrators, the Prophet's companions and their disciples.

Another source of problems pertaining to the study, verification and authentication of Hadith is the indulgence of unqualified intruders into this field, most of whom lack the basic tools required by scholars of Hadith, such as the ability to apply appropriate methodology and have the insight to identify different categories of Hadith, let alone interpret them and understand their inner meanings.

It is extremely wrong to make simplistic and superficial judgments of hadiths, for this inevitably leads to deviation from the foundations of Sunna as originally understood and interpreted by our predecessors over the centuries.

The companions of the Prophet and the early scholars of Islam (Ulama), have laid the foundations for a/l Islamic sciences, including Quranic interpretation, Sunnah and language. Those foundations, which are intended to preserve the purity of Islam and protect it against misinterpretation, were based on solid evidence derived directly from the Holy Quran and the Prophet's Sayings, and supported by the consensus of the Ulama through the centuries. In compliance with Islamic teachings, attempts to dismantle those foundations by additions, deletions or misinterpretations should not be allowed. The Holy Quran as well as the Sunnah have repeatedly warned against all forms of innovations in any of the teachings of Islam, let alone innovations involving one of the roots of Islamic knowledge, namely the Prophet's Sunna.

After having spent more than half a century studying Hadith, and still considering myself to be a beginner, I would like to convey some advice to all students of this important branch of Islamic studies. I would like to say to them: (a) learn Hadith for its own sake; (b) let the study of Hadith be your only major concern; (c) don't hasten to achieve a position that could only be achieved through patience and perseverance; and (d) remember that making a judgment on the authenticity of a hadith means making a choice between truth and falsehood.

I conclude by asking Almighty Allah to continue to bestow His bounty and benevolence on the Kingdom and all Muslim countries, and to protect the Kingdom and guide its leader, the Custodian of the Two

Holy Mosques, on the path of righteousness. I would also like to thank King Faisal International Prize for its recognition of scholarship and for continuing the humanitarian efforts of the late King Faisal Ibn Abd Al-Aziz, may Allah have mercy on him.

Best wishes and Assalam Alaikum.