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## Forgiveness

Allah, تعالى, is our Creator and He knows us best. He, تعالى, tells us not to despair of His Grace and Mercy if we are feeling remorseful after making a mistake, committing a sin or falling from Grace. He consoles His remorseful devotees by saying:

قُلْ يُعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ; وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ [الزمر: 53، 54].

Allah Almighty said: **“O My devoted servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. And return (in repentance) to your Lord and submit to Him before the punishment comes upon you; then you will not be helped.”** (Az-Zumar: 53-54).

Allah the Almighty knows that there are moments where we can fail the test and through weakness and fear, we end up wronging ourselves. We all know that weakness is not an excuse before the law, however, Allah, in His infinite Mercy and Compassion tells us that a mistake is not the end. You should try to always do the right thing and there is tremendous merit and blessings by being staunchly devoted to your faith. However, should you stumble and fall, you must know that Allah is Forgiving, Most Merciful, all you must do is repent, believe and make amends for your error. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings upon him, was our perfect role model, he was immune from sin, despite that, he still said:

والذي نفسي بيده، لو لم تذنبا لذهب الله تعالى بكم ولجاء بقوم يذنبون فيستغفرون الله تعالى فيغفر لهم (صحيح مسلم)

‘By Him in whose hand is my soul, if you did not sin, Allaah would take you and bring people who did sin, ask Allah for forgiveness - and He would forgive them.’ (Muslim)

The situation of the best amongst the pious and guided people is that when they fall into error or sin, they repent and seek Allah’s forgiveness . The Prophet sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam said:

قال عليه الصلاة والسلام: كل بني آدم خطاء، وخير الخطائين التوابون (رواه الإمام أحمد والترمذي)

‘All the children of Adam are errant and the best among the errant are those who repent.’ (Ahmad and others)

It is a manifestation of the Mercy of Allah upon His Creation that He stretches out His Hand during the night so that those who sin during the day may repent and stretches His Hand out during the day in order for those who sinned during the night to repent. He forgives all sins when there is genuine remorse and repentance. People should therefore not despair of the mercy of their Lord however great and many their falls may be. Allah said:

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وَمَنْ يَفْتَنُ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ [الحجر: 56].

**“And who would despair of the mercy of his Lord except for those astray?” (Al-Hijr).**

At-Tirmidhi and others reported on the authority of Anas ibn Maalik who said, ‘I heard the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam saying:

يا ابن آدم إنك ما دعوتني ورجوتني غفرت لك على ما كان فيك ولا أبالي، يا ابن آدم لو بلغت ذنوبك عنان السماء ثم استغفرتني غفرت لك ولا أبالي، يا ابن آدم إنك لو أتيتني بقراب الأرض خطايا ثم لقيتني لا تشرك بي شيئا لأتيتك بقرابها مغفرة (رواه الترمذي وصححه ابن القيم وحسنه الألباني).

“Allah says, ‘O son of Adam! As long as you call unto Me and appeal to Me, I will forgive what is in you without concern. O son of Adam! If your sins were to reach the clouds in the heaven and you then seek my forgiveness, I will forgive you without concern. O Son of Adam, if you come to Me with near the fill of the earth in mistakes, but you meet Me without having associated any partner with Me, I will give you near its fill of forgiveness.” (narrated by Tirmizy, corrected by Ibnul Qayyim and declared Hassan by Albany).

Allah commanded His Messenger sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam – even though he is the most person and was without sin - to frequently ask for forgiveness:

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ [محمد: 19]،

**“So know (O Muhammad) that their is no deity except Allah and ask forgiveness for your shortcomings and for the believing men and believing women.” (Muhammad: 19).**

The Messenger of Allah sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, therefore used to ask Allah for forgiveness frequently during the day and night and said of himself: “I swear by Allah, I seek Allah’s forgiveness and repent to Him seventy times a day.” (Bukhari).

Abu Daawood narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar that he said: “We used to count the Messenger of Allah sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam in a single sitting, saying: “O my Lord, forgive me and accept my repentance. Indeed, you are the One Who accepts repentance, the Most-Merciful” one-hundred times.

It is a characteristic of resolute and faithful Muslims that notwithstanding the fact that they make every effort to obey Allah and do what is right, they still beseech Allah for forgiveness just in case they have fallen short in any duty or offended anyone without realising. They do so without despair or impatience. Their hearts are filled with the love of Allah and their feet are firmly placed doing good deeds.

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الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ; الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ  
بِالْأَسْحَارِ [آل عمران: 16، 17].

**“Those who say: Our Lord, we believe, so forgive us our sins and protect us against the torment of the Fire. (They are) the patient, the true, the obedient, those who spend (in the way of Allah), and those who seek forgiveness before dawn.” (Aal-‘Imraan).**

These are the pious people, those who observe their obligations, perform acts of obedience and seek Allah’s forgiveness.

Among the good deeds that they do:

كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ; وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ [الذاريات: 17، 18].

**“They used to sleep but little of the night and at pre-dawn would seek forgiveness.” (Adh-Dhaariyaat: 17).**

The Messenger of Allaah *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, would make *Istighfaar* whenever he concluded his *Salaah*. Similarly, all pilgrims to Mecca are enjoined to make *Istighfaar* when they leave Arafah and Al-Mash’aril-Haram. Allah Almighty said:

ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ [البقرة: 199].

**“Then depart from the place where (all) the people depart and ask forgiveness of Allah. Indeed Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Al-Baqarah: 199).**

It is a manifestation of Allah’s Mercy that He promises a generous reward for *Al-Istighfaar*. Plentiful *Istighfaar* and repentance brings forth divine mercy and success in this life and the next. Allah said:

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

**“And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, so that you might succeed.” (An-Noor).**

If there is a lot of *Istighfaar* among the Muslims and it is done sincerely, Allah Almighty will prevent calamities and different types of tribulations from affecting them. Allah said:

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ [الأنفال: 33].

**“And Allah would not punish them while they seek forgiveness.” (Al-Anfaal: 33).**

Making much *Istighfaar* also removes sorrow and distress, saves one from awkward situations and brings provision from unexpected sources. The Prophet *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* said:

عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنهما قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: من لزم الاستغفار، جعل الله له من كل ضيقٍ مخرجاً، ومن كل همٍّ فرجاً، ورزقاً من حيث لا يحتسب. رواه أبو داود.

**“Whoever makes Istighfaar frequently, Allaah will provide a way for him out of every distress and provide for him from sources he could never expect.”**

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These are some of the virtues of *Istighfaar* and their benefits which Allah and his Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam* have explained to us. The people of *Imaan* and piety make a lot of *Istighfaar* and repentance. *Istighfaar* is not merely empty words that are uttered, these words must be rooted in the heart. They must feel remorse and regret for their errors, sins or deficiency in their duties and be determined never to repeat these again. These are the conditions of sincere repentance which Allah enjoins on those who believe in Him and for which He promises forgiveness and Paradise. He says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ  
(التحریم 8)

**“O you who have believed! Repent to Allah with sincere repentance lest your Lord will remove from you your misdeeds and admit you into gardens beneath which rivers flow.”** (At-Tahreem: 8).

Remember that nobody will leave this world before seeing the results of their good and bad deeds. Your actions will be judged according to your intentions. Endeavour for your hereafter in your days and nights. Beware of postponing repentance and good deeds as death may come to you suddenly. Do not be deceived by the forbearance of Allah, for He is the Only One who can grant genuine respite and forgiveness.

*Muslim* also reported that the last thing the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam* used to say in his prayer just before saying *Salaam* was:

اللهم اغفر لي ما قدّمت، وما أخّرت، وما أسررت، وما أعلنت، وما أسرفْتُ، وما أنت أعلم به مني، أنت المقدم، وأنت المؤخّر، لا إله إلا أنت. رواه مسلم.

**“O Allah, forgive me what I put forward and what I delayed, what I concealed and what I revealed and what I overdid and what You are more knowing of than I am, you are the One who brings forward and leaves back, there is no God except You.”** (Reported by Muslim).

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