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الاستغفار

SEEKING FORGIVENESS

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وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

And none can forgive sins but Allāh.

PUBLISHERS NOTE

All praise is due to Allāh, and may He grant peace and blessings upon His Last Messenger Muhammad ﷺ.

This is a translation of one of the smaller publications from the works of Shaykh Al-Islam Taqiuddin Ahmad bin 'Abdul-Halim Ibn Taymiyyah. It has been published in Arabic with the title, "*Istagfar*," or, "Seeking Forgiveness."

This discussion deals with the different views that average people and scholars alike have about the topic of seeking forgiveness:

- Does one seek forgiveness for doing something wrong or for violating a prohibition?
- Is a person required to seek forgiveness for what he did while unaware?
- Is one required to seek forgiveness for what they thought about but did not act upon?
- If one repents for a sin and then commits it later, is his original repentance invalid or not?

These questions and more are answered in Shaykh Al-Islam's "Seeking Forgiveness."

We have verified our version to meet the source section of *Majmu' Al-Fatawa* (11:619) from where the original Arabic publication has been taken. We have added a few brief references to the text for some *Hadiths*. I would like to express gratitude to brother Ebrahim Aly Ma'rouf for the original translation of this booklet, and the Darussalam staff for their editing and layout work.

In the end all praise is due to Allāh, and upon Him we depend.

Abdul-Malik Mujahid

General Manager

Darussalam

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allāh, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

O My Lord, Most Generous! Grant ease and support (in this work).

Shaykh Al-Islam, may Allāh have mercy on him, said:

Praise be to Allāh, we praise Him, seek His Help and ask His Forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allāh against the evils of our souls and the evils of our deeds.

Whomever Allāh guides, there is no one to lead him astray, and whomever He misleads, there is no one who can guide him.

I testify that there is none worthy of being worshipped except Allāh, Who has no partner, and I testify that Muhammad is His Servant and His Messenger. May the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family.



Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness is due to Abandonment of the Commandments and Doing what is Forbidden

The first is that which most people are unaware of; Allāh, the Most High, says:

﴿فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ بِالْعِشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَارِ﴾

﴿So be patient. Verily the promise of Allāh is true, and ask forgiveness for your sin and glorify the praises of your Lord by day and by night.﴾ (40:55)

He also says:

﴿فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَاكُمْ﴾

﴿So know that none has the right to be worshipped except Allāh, and ask forgiveness for your sin, and also for the believing men and the believing women. And Allāh knows well your moving about, and your place of rest.﴾ (47:19)

And He says:

﴿لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ﴾

﴿That Allāh may forgive you your sins of the past and the future.﴾ (46:2) (Referring to Muhammad ﷺ)

And His saying (on the tongue of our Messenger ﷺ):

﴿أَلَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ ﴿٢﴾ وَإِنْ أَسْتَعْفِفُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُبْتَغِمْكُمْ مَنَعًا حَسَنًا إِلَىٰ أَعْمَلِ مَسْئَةٍ وَيُؤْتِي كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ ﴿٣﴾﴾

﴿(Saying) worship none but Allāh. Verily, I am unto you from Him a warner and a bringer of glad tidings.' And (commanding you): 'Seek the forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him in repentance, that He may grant you good enjoyment, for a term appointed.'﴾ (11:2-3)

We say: Repentance and asking for forgiveness is for abandoning a commandment and committing a forbidden action. Both of these are from the evil deeds, faults, and sin.

According to everyone, the act of abandoning faith, *Tawhid*, or the obligatory duties that Allāh has imposed on the heart and the body is undoubtedly a form of sin. Actually, it is in fact the worse of the two (between abandoning commandments and committing prohibitions). We have explained this in what we wrote about the principles before my journey to Egypt.

So abandoning commandments is worse than committing prohibitions, as abandoning faith, and *Tawhid* are classified under the former. Whoever comes with faith and *Tawhid* will not abide forever in the Fire, no matter what he did.

And whoever did not come with faith and *Tawhid*, will abide forever in the Fire, even though his (other) sins were few; like the ascetics and the worshippers among

the polytheists and the people of the Book, the worshippers among the Hindu polytheists, and the Christian worshippers, and others. Such people neither commit murder, adultery, nor do they oppress people. Yet, in the case of the obligatory *Tawhid* and faith, they have neglected it.

It may be said: Abandoning the obligatory faith and *Tawhid* can only occur by being preoccupied with its opposite. If its opposite is disbelief, then they will be punished for that, and it is among the prohibited things. If its opposite is one of the types of allowed things, like being preoccupied with the soul's whims and lusts, such as eating, drinking, love of power and other things, instead of the obligatory faith, then the punishment here is because of the abandonment of faith. The punishment in this case is not because of doing such prohibited actions.

It may be said also: "Whenever one abandons faith and *Tawhid*, he only leaves them for disbelief and *Shirk*. The soul has to have a god to worship. Thus, he who does not worship Ar-Rahman, worships Shaytan."

The reply is that worshipping Shaytan occurs in a general manner. This is when he orders one to indulge himself in what prevents him from faith and *Tawhid*. Then, in such a case it is said, 'He (man) worshipped him.' Similarly, whoever obeys Shaytan worships him. But this is a form of worship without actually being worship.

People are of two types: The seekers of religion and the

seekers of the world.

Shaytan commands the seekers of religion to commit *Shirk* and innovation (*Bid'ah*), like the worshippers among the polytheists and the People of the Book.

He (Shaytan) commands the seekers of the world to (indulge in) the physical lusts. In a *Hadith*, the Prophet ﷺ said:

«إِنَّ أَخَوْفَ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهَوَاتُ الْغَيِّ فِي بُطُونِكُمْ وَفُرُوجِكُمْ وَمُضِلَّاتُ الْفِتَنِ»

«The thing that I fear most for you are the lusts of temptation in your bellies, private parts, and the misguidance of the trials.»^[1]

For this reason Al-Hasan Al-Basri said when this *Hadith* was mentioned:

"Every worker has his peak, and each peak has a period of time. If one having such peak managed to be moderate and just (in his deeds), then hope for him (salvation). But if he was one at whom the people point with their fingers, do not consider him."^[2]

They said: "When you (Al-Hasan) pass by in the market place, the people point at you with their fingers."

He said that he did mean this, but he meant the one innovating in his religion, and the wicked person in his worldly affairs.

¹ Ahmad in his *Musnad*, (4:420-423) with a *Sahih* chain.

² Reported by At-Tirmidhi, no. 2453 and Ibn Hibban, no. 349.

I have explained the positions of the two kinds of people in many places, just as we have mentioned in *Iqtidha' As-Sirat Al-Mustaqim* when we spoke about Allāh's saying:

﴿فَاسْتَمْتُوا بِخَلْقِهِمْ فَاسْتَمْتُمْ بِخَلْقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلْقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِي خَاضُوا﴾

﴿They had enjoyed their portion (awhile), so enjoy your portion (awhile) as those before you enjoyed their portion (awhile); and you indulged in play and pastime as they indulged in play and pastime.﴾ (9:69)

This is discussed in a different place. Thus, abandoning the obligatory and committing the prohibited are intricately related. Hence, it is said that whoever did what he has been prohibited from doing, has disobeyed the commandment.

If a husband said to his wife: "If you disobey me you are divorced." And he forbade her, but she disobeyed him, there are two views:

The most correct of them is that she would be divorced.

Some *Fiqh* scholars justify this since it is counted among the customs of people as disobedience. They make it fundamentally of two kinds.

The truth is that every prohibited action comprises a desire and a temptation to what the one prohibition intended. Thus, it is a commandment, which comprises both this and that.

Examples of these are:

The saying of Al-Khidhr to Musa:

﴿قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ۖ وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا ۚ قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا وَلَا أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا ۚ﴾

﴿Verily, you will not be able to have patience with me. And how can you have patience about a thing which you know not?﴾ (Musa) said: 'If Allāh wills, you will find me patient, and I will not disobey you in aught.'﴾ (18:67-68)

He said:

﴿قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ أُحْدِثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ۚ﴾

﴿He said, 'If you follow me, ask me not about anything till I myself mention it to you'﴾ (18:70)

So his saying:

﴿قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ أُحْدِثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ۚ﴾

﴿Ask me not about anything till I myself mention it to you﴾ (18:70)

refers to Musa's saying:

﴿وَلَا أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا ۚ﴾

﴿I will not disobey you in aught﴾ (18:69)

Also the saying of Musa to his brother:

﴿قَالَ يَهْرُونُ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا ۙ أَلَّا تَتَّبِعُهُمُ فَلَاحُ أَفْضَلُ ۚ أَمْرِي ۚ﴾

﴿He said, 'O Harun! What prevented you when you saw them going astray, that you followed me not (according to my advice to you)? Have you then disobeyed my order?﴾ (20:92-93)

Musa had told him:

﴿اٰخَلَفْنِيْ فِيْ قَوْمِيْ وَاصْلِحْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ﴾ (١٢١)

﴿Take my place among my people, act in the right way, and follow not the way of the mischief-makers.﴾ (7:142)

This is a prohibition, he blamed him because he did not follow him, and said to him: "Have you then disobeyed my order?" The worshippers of the calf were mischief-makers. All of this falls under a commandment. The statement of Allāh, the Almighty:

﴿مَلٰٓئِكَةُ غَلٰظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُوْنَ اِلٰهَ مَا اَمَرَهُمْ وَيَقْعُلُوْنَ مَا يُوْمَرُوْنَ﴾ (٦٦)

﴿Over which are (appointed) angels stern and severe, who disobey not (from executing) the commands they receive from Allāh, but do that which they are commanded.﴾ (66:6)

(Referring to the gatekeepers of Hell). Thus, the angels do not disobey Him when He prohibits them from something.

The statement of Allāh, the Almighty, while speaking about the Messenger ﷺ:

﴿فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِيْنَ يُخَالِفُوْنَ عَنْ اَمْرِىْ اَنْ يُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ اَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ﴾ (٢٤)

﴿And let those who oppose the Messenger's commandment beware lest some disbelief should befall them or a painful torment be inflicted on them.﴾ (24:63)

Whoever does what he ﷺ has prohibited, opposes his command.

Allāh, the Almighty said:

﴿وَعَصٰٓى اٰدَمُ رَبَّهُۥ فَغَوٰى﴾ (١٢١)

﴿Thus did Adam disobey his Lord, so he went astray.﴾ (20:121)

It was a prohibited action.

Allāh's statement:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ اِذَا قَضٰى اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهُ اَمْرًا اَنْ يَكُوْنَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ اَمْرِهِمْ﴾ (٣٣)

﴿It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allāh and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision.﴾ (33:36)

In the following *Hadith* the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ stresses that abandoning a prohibited action should be given priority to doing a commanded one:

﴿اِذَا نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ، وَاِذَا اَمَرْتُكُمْ بِاَمْرٍ فَاْتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ﴾

﴿If I prohibit you anything, stay away from it. And if I commanded you anything, do as much of it as you are able to do.﴾

The statement of Allāh, the Almighty:

﴿يَوْمَئِذٍ يُوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَعَصَوْا الرَّسُوْلَ لَوْ سُوٓى بِهِمُ الْاَرْضُ﴾ (٤٢)

﴿On that day those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish that they were buried in the earth.﴾ (4:42)

So disobedience is an offense against a command, and the one who violates a prohibition is disobedient since he is opposing a commandment. The one committing a prohibition may be more offensive than the one