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## Three Ways to Forgiveness<sup>1</sup>

*“Oh son of Adam, as long as you call upon Me and hope in Me, I will forgive you for whatever (sins) you have and I won’t mind...”*

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbalee’s book, “Jaami’ Al-‘Uloom wal-Hikam”, is an explanation of the forty-two famous Hadeeths collected by Imaam An-Nawawee. The Hadeeth explained in this eBook is the last one, number forty-two. [T.N – Translator’s Note]

## The Hadeeth

حَدَّثَنَا أَنَسُ بْنُ مَالِكٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ (ﷺ) عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ إِنَّكَ مَا دَعَوْتَنِي وَرَجَوْتَنِي غَفَرْتُ لَكَ عَلَى مَا كَانَ فِيكَ وَلَا أُبَالِي يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ لَوْ بَلَغَتْ ذُنُوبُكَ عَنَانَ السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ اسْتَغْفَرْتَنِي غَفَرْتُ لَكَ وَلَا أُبَالِي يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ إِنَّكَ لَوْ أَتَيْتَنِي بِقُرَابِ الْأَرْضِ خَطَايَا ثُمَّ لَقِيتَنِي لَا تُشْرِكُ بِي شَيْئًا لَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِقُرَابِهَا مَغْفِرَةً

Anas Ibn Maalik (رضي الله عنه) said: I heard Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying: "Allaah (ﷻ) said, 'Oh son of Aadam, as long as you call on Me and hope in Me, I will forgive you for whatever (sins) you have and I won't mind. Oh son of Aadam, if your sins were to reach the clouds in the sky and then were you to ask for My forgiveness, I would forgive you and would not mind. Oh son of Aadam, if you were to come to Me with sins as much as the earth and then you meet Me not worshipping anything with Me, I would come to you with as much forgiveness'"<sup>2</sup>

This Hadeeth of Anas (رضي الله عنه) contains three ways to obtain forgiveness...

<sup>2</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by At-Tirmidhee (no. 3540). Shaykh Al-Albaanee said it's authentic in "Saheeh Sunan At-Tirmidhee" (no. 2805).

## The First Way: Hopeful Supplication

The first way is by supplication and hope. Calling upon Allaah is something we've been commanded to do and have been promised a response as Allaah (ﷻ) says:

﴿ وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ ﴾

**And your Lord said, “Call upon Me, I will answer you.”**

[Soorah Ghaafir, 40:60]

Also, in the four famous collections of Hadeeth (An-Nasaaee, Abu Daawood, At-Tirmidhee, & Ibn Maajah), An-Nu'maan Ibn Basheer (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

إِنَّ الدُّعَاءَ هُوَ الْعِبَادَةُ

“Supplication – it is definitely (a form of) worship.”

(An-Nu'maan continues,) “Then he recited this (the previous) verse.”<sup>3</sup>

However, supplication is only guaranteed a response when its conditions are fulfilled and anything that prevents the response is avoided.

A response may be delayed or withheld because some of its conditions are not met or because of some other things or etiquettes that prevent one's supplication from being answered.<sup>4</sup>

One of the greatest of these conditions is that the caller should put his whole heart into his supplication and have certain hope that Allaah will answer him, as in the Hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

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<sup>3</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree in “Al-Adab wal-Mufrad”, An-Nasaaee, Abu Daawood, At-Tirmidhee, Ibn Maajah, and Ahmad. At-Tirmidhee said it's “A Hasan Saheeh Hadeeth”. Al-Haakim also said it's authentic and Ath-Thahabee agreed with him. See “Ahkaam Al-Janaaiz” (pg. 194) by Al-Albaanee.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Rajab explains in another part of his book, “Jaami' Al-Uloom wal-Hikam,” some conditions for the acceptance of supplication such as a person's sustenance being permissible and from permissible means, the supplicant being certain of Allaah's response, the supplicant's heart being fully attentive and present during supplication, etc. [T.N]

ادْعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَنْتُمْ مُوقِنُونَ بِالْإِجَابَةِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُ دُعَاءَ مَنْ قَلْبٍ غَافِلٍ لِأِهِ

“Call upon Allaah while you’re certain of the response. And know that Allaah does not answer the supplication from a careless, inattentive heart.”<sup>5</sup>

For this (that one should be certain of a response), the servant has been forbidden to say in his supplication:

لَا يَقُولَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي إِنْ شِئْتَ اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْنِي إِنْ شِئْتَ لِيَعْزِمَ الْمَسْأَلَةَ فَإِنَّهُ لَا مُكْرَهَ لَهُ

“None of you should say, ‘Oh Allaah, forgive me if You want. Oh Allaah, have mercy on me if You want.’ (Instead,) he should be certain and determined in asking; certainly no one forces or compels Him anyway.”<sup>6</sup>

A person should also not be too hasty and therefore stop calling on Allaah if the response he wants doesn’t come immediately. This is one of those things that could prevent supplications from being answered. The servant shouldn’t lose hope in having his supplication answered even if time passes. Certainly, Allaah loves those who’re persistent and constantly supplicate to Him.

Allaah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

**And call upon Him in fear and hope. For sure, the Allaah’s mercy is near to those who do good.**

[Soorah Al-‘Araaf, 7:56]

So, as long as a servant persists in calling on Allaah, aspiring for a certain response without losing hope, then he’s close to getting his response – whoever consistently knocks on the door will eventually have it opened for him.

<sup>5</sup> **Hasan:** Recorded by At-Tirmidhee (no. 3479), Al-Haakim and others. It’s acceptable (Hasan) based on its many supporting chains. Al-Albaanee also declared it Hasan in “Saheeh Sunan At-Tirmidhee” (no. 2766).

<sup>6</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 6339, 7477) and Muslim (no. 2679) and by At-Tirmidhee, Abu Daawood, Ibn Maajah, Imaam Ahmad, and others.

One of the most important things a servant could ask his Lord for is the forgiveness of his sins. That implies being saved from the Fire and entering Paradise. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

### حَوْلَهَا نُدْنِدُنُ

“In general, it is about that (the Fire & Paradise) that we constantly supplicate for.”<sup>7</sup>

Abu Muslim Al-Khawlaanee said, “I never made a supplication that I mentioned the Fire except that I ended up making it (the supplication) totally for seeking protection from it.”

One way that Allaah’s merciful towards His servant is that whenever a servant calls on Him, seeking help with any of his needs of this world, He assists him with it and exchanges it for something better. He may, as a response to his call, either prevent some harm from befalling him, save the response and reward for him in the Hereafter, or He may forgive one of his sins because of his supplication. Imaam Ahmad records in “Al-Musnad” a Hadeeth from Abu Sa’eed (رضي الله عنه) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَدْعُو بِدَعْوَةٍ لَيْسَ فِيهَا إِثْمٌ وَلَا قَطِيعَةٌ رَحِمَ إِلَّا أَعْطَاهُ اللَّهُ بِهَا إِحْدَى  
ثَلَاثٍ إِمَّا أَنْ تُعَجَّلَ لَهُ دَعْوَتُهُ وَإِمَّا أَنْ يَدْخِرَهَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَإِمَّا أَنْ يَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ مِنْ

### السُّوءِ مِثْلَهَا

“No Muslim supplicates, as long as it doesn’t pertain to anything sinful or the cutting of kinship ties, except that Allaah will give him due to it one of three things: either He’ll immediately respond to his supplication, or He’ll save it (its reward) for him in the hereafter, or He’ll prevent a similar evil from befalling him.”

The companions then said, “In that case, we will increase (in supplication)”. The Prophet (ﷺ) replied:

<sup>7</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by Abu Daawood (no. 792), Ibn Maajah (no. 910), and others. Al-Albaanee declared it to be authentic in “Saheeh Sunan Abee Daawood” (no. 710). The full text of the Hadeeth is that the Prophet (ﷺ) asked a man, “What do you say in prayer?” He replied, “I make the *Tashahhud* and then I say, ‘Oh Allaah, I ask You for Paradise and I seek Your protection from the Fire.’ As for me, I’m not proficient in making those detailed, elaborate supplications like you and Mu’aadh do.” The Prophet (ﷺ) then replied with the above Hadeeth.

اللَّهُ أَكْثَرُ

Allaah will increase even more.<sup>8</sup>

In any case, persistence and diligence in supplicating for forgiveness while hoping in Allaah is the way to obtain forgiveness.

Another excellent way to get this forgiveness is that whenever a servant commits a sin, he neither seeks nor hopes for anyone's forgiveness other than his Lord's. He knows that no one forgives sins or takes people to account for them other than Allaah (ﷻ).

As for Allaah's saying (in the main Hadeeth on pg. 2), "**As long as you call on Me and hope in Me, I will forgive you for whatever (sins) you have and I won't mind,**" this means: No matter how numerous your sins and bad deeds may be, that (forgiveness) will not be something too great for Me and I will not consider it too much.

As recorded in "Saheeh Muslim", the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

إِذَا دَعَا أَحَدُكُمْ فَلَا يَقُلْ اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي إِنْ شِئْتَ وَلَكِنْ لِيَعِزُّمِ الْمَسْأَلَةَ وَلِيُعِظَّمَ الرَّغْبَةَ  
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَتَعَاطَمُهُ شَيْءٌ أَحَدُهُ

"When anyone of you supplicates, he shouldn't say, "Oh Allaah, forgive me if You want." But he should be resolved and certain in his request and increase his hope and enthusiasm, for Allaah – nothing is too great for Him to give."<sup>9</sup>

So, regardless of how great and numerous a servant's sins may be, definitely the pardon and forgiveness of Allaah is much greater. Such sins are completely insignificant when compared to the Allaah's forgiveness and pardon.

Someone said (in poetry form):

<sup>8</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by Imaam Ahmad (no. 10749) and Saleem Al-Hilaalee is of the opinion that it's authentic based on its supporting chains, as he explains in the checking of "Jaami' Al-'Uloom wal-Hikam" (pg. 556-557).

<sup>9</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by Muslim (no. 2679).

يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ عَظُمَتُ ذُنُوبِي كَثِيرَةٌ      فَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُ بِأَنَّ عَفْوَكَ أَعْظَمُ

إِنْ كَانَ لَا يَرْجُوكَ إِلَّا مُحْسِنٌ      فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَدْعُو وَيَرْجُو الْمُجْرِمُ

مَا لِي إِلَيْكَ وَسِيلَةٌ إِلَّا الرَّجَا      وَجَمِيلُ عَفْوَكَ ثُمَّ إِنِّي مُسْلِمٌ

My Lord, when my sins become numerous, I've already known Your pardon is greater. If it's only the good-doer who has hope in You, then who would the sinner call on and hope in? I've no way to You except by hope and the magnificence of Your forgiveness – then the fact I am Muslim.

The Second Way:  
**Asking for Forgiveness**

The second way to obtain forgiveness is to sincerely ask for it even if your sins are very serious, as numerous as the clouds in the sky or as far as the eye can see. In another narration of the same Hadeeth, the wording is:

لَوْ أَجْطَأْتُمْ حَتَّى بَلَغَتْ خَطَايَاكُمْ مَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ اسْتَغْفَرْتُمْ اللَّهَ لَغَفَرَ لَكُمْ

If you were to commit so many sins that they filled up all between the sky and earth and then you were to ask for Allaah's forgiveness, He would forgive you.

Asking for this forgiveness is to seek protection from the evil results of one's sins and for them to be concealed. Seeking forgiveness is been mentioned many times in the Quraan.

Sometimes, seeking forgiveness comes in the form of a command like in the statement of Allaah (ﷻ):

﴿وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾

**And ask forgiveness from Allaah. Surely, Allaah is Forgiving, Merciful.**

[Soorah Al-Baqarah, 2:199]

And His statement:

﴿وَأَنْ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ﴾

**And seek forgiveness of your Lord and repent to Him.**

[Soorah Hood, 11:3]

At other times, Allaah praises those who consistently ask for His forgiveness:

﴿وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ﴾

**...and those who seek forgiveness before dawn.**

[Soorah Aali-'Imraan, 3:17]

And He (ﷻ) says:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ﴾

**And those who, if they commit an immoral deed or wrong themselves, they remember Allaah and ask for forgiveness for their sins. And who can forgive sins other than Allaah?**

[Soorah Aali-'Imraan, 3:135]

And other times, it's even mentioned that Allaah forgives anyone who asks His forgiveness.

﴿ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴾

**And whoever commits an evil or wrongs himself but then asks for Allaah's forgiveness, he will find Allaah Forgiving, Merciful.**

[Soorah An-Nisaa, 4:110]

Often, seeking forgiveness is mentioned alongside repentance. When it is, seeking forgiveness means to actually ask for Allaah's forgiveness by the tongue while repentance means to refrain from sinning with the heart and limbs.

Other times, seeking forgiveness is mentioned alone (without the mention of repentance) and the receiving Allaah's forgiveness is mentioned as the result; such is the case with this Hadeeth (on pg. 2) and others like it.

It's been said that whenever seeking forgiveness is mentioned, it's understood to also include repentance. It's also been said that all the texts that mention only seeking forgiveness are general, yet are still tied to the condition mentioned in the verse of Soorah Aali-'Imraan<sup>10</sup> in that there should be no insistence and continuation of the sin. In this verse, Allaah promises

<sup>10</sup> The verse referred to here is: **And those who, if they commit an immoral deed or wrong themselves, they remember Allaah and seek forgiveness for their sins. And who can forgive sins other than Allaah? (They are) those who don't knowingly persist in what they've done.** [Soorah Aali-'Imraan, 3:135]. [T.N]

forgiveness to whoever asks for it and doesn't persist in committing it. So, with this understanding, the general texts mentioning seeking forgiveness are understood to be with this condition. So, in other words, when someone says, "Oh Allaah, forgive me," he's requesting His forgiveness and supplicating for it. The ruling of it is the same as any other supplication – if Allaah wills, He may answer and forgive the supplicant, especially when the supplication originates from a heart that has ceased committing the sin. Or if it were made during one of the times that a response is certain like before dawn or at the end of the prayers, again then the response can be expected if Allaah wills.

A Hadeeth narrated by Aboo Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) in the two authentic collections ("Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree" & "Saheeh Muslim") confirms this when the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

قَالَ إِنَّ عَبْدًا أَصَابَ ذَنْبًا وَرَبِّمَا قَالَ أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا فَقَالَ رَبُّ أَدْنَبْتُ وَرَبِّمَا قَالَ أَصَبْتُ فَأَغْفِرُ  
 لِي فَقَالَ رَبُّهُ أَعَلِمَ عَبْدِي أَنَّ لَهُ رَبًّا يَغْفِرُ الذَّنْبَ وَيَأْخُذُ بِهِ غَفَرْتُ لِعَبْدِي ثُمَّ مَكَثَ مَا  
 شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ أَصَابَ ذَنْبًا أَوْ أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا فَقَالَ رَبُّ أَدْنَبْتُ أَوْ أَصَبْتُ آخَرَ فَأَغْفِرُهُ فَقَالَ  
 أَعَلِمَ عَبْدِي أَنَّ لَهُ رَبًّا يَغْفِرُ الذَّنْبَ وَيَأْخُذُ بِهِ غَفَرْتُ لِعَبْدِي ثُمَّ مَكَثَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ  
 أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا وَرَبِّمَا قَالَ أَصَابَ ذَنْبًا قَالَ قَالَ رَبُّ أَصَبْتُ أَوْ قَالَ أَذْنَبْتُ آخَرَ فَأَغْفِرُهُ لِي  
 فَقَالَ أَعَلِمَ عَبْدِي أَنَّ لَهُ رَبًّا يَغْفِرُ الذَّنْبَ وَيَأْخُذُ بِهِ غَفَرْتُ لِعَبْدِي ثَلَاثًا فَلْيَعْمَلْ مَا شَاءَ

"There was a servant who committed a sin and then said, 'My Lord, I've sinned so forgive me.' So his Lord replied, 'Does My servant know he has a Lord who forgives sins and takes them to account? I've forgiven My servant.' Then, a period of time passed as Allaah willed, and he sinned again. He said, 'My Lord, I've committed another sin so forgive it.' He said, 'Does My servant know he has a Lord who forgives sins and takes them to account? I've forgiven My servant.' Then, another period of time passed as Allaah willed, and he committed another sin. He said, 'My Lord, I've sinned again so forgive it.' He said, 'Does My servant know that he has a Lord who forgives sins and takes them to account? I've forgiven My servant,' for the third time (then adding), 'So let him do as he pleases.'"<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Saheeh: Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 7507) and Muslim (no. 2758).

Meaning: He will be forgiven as long as he continues in this state; whenever he sins, he simply (but sincerely) asks for forgiveness.

Apparently, it's understood that his asking for forgiveness is without insisting on or intending to commit the same sin again.

As for asking forgiveness just with the tongue while the heart's still intent on committing the sin again, this is merely a supplication; if Allaah wills, He may forgive him, otherwise He may not.

It may be that his insistence upon committing the same sin could become the very factor that prevents his supplication from being answered. In Imaam Ahmad's "Al-Musnad", there's the Hadeeth of 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Umar (رضي الله عنه):

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصْرِرِينَ الَّذِينَ يُصِرُّونَ عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

"Let the insistent sinners beware, those who insist on committing what they did while they know."<sup>12</sup>

So, the complete way to seek forgiveness – the way that which assures forgiveness – is done by also not committing the sin again. Allaah has praised such people and promised them forgiveness.<sup>13</sup>

Undoubtedly, the best way to ask forgiveness of Allaah is by not insisting on the sin. In this way, the servant is hopeful of a true, sincere repentance. If he says only by his tongue, "I seek forgiveness from Allaah," while his heart hasn't fully renounced the sin, he's merely calling upon Allaah to forgive him (without actual repentance). This is still good though, because it's hoped he will also be answered.

As for he who repents with a false repentance, this is not real repentance as some people believe. True repentance isn't possible unless one stops committing the sin.<sup>14</sup> When someone says, "I seek Allaah's forgiveness and I repent to Him," then there are two possible scenarios:

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<sup>12</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by Ahmad (no. 6505, 7001) and Saleem Al-Hilaalee says it's authentic as he explained in his checking of "Jaami' Al-'Uloom wal-Hikam" (pg. 559).

<sup>13</sup> As in the verse (3:135) mentioned on pg. 8, footnote no. 10. [T.N]

<sup>14</sup> Note that Ibn Rajab is differentiating between asking for forgiveness and repentance. [T.N]

1. His heart is still insistent upon committing the sin. In this case, he's lying in his statement, "I repent to You," because he has actually not repented. So, it's wrong for him to say of himself that he's repenting while he really isn't.
2. He has given up the sin with his heart and doesn't insist upon doing it.

The people have differed with regards to the permissibility of one (who continues to insist upon the sin) saying, "I repent to Allaah." A group of the Salaf disliked it and they are the companions of Aboo Haneefah. This is reported from them by At-Tahaawee.

Ar-Rabee' Ibn Khaytham said that his saying, "I repent to Him," in this case is a lie and even another sin. Instead, he should say, "Oh Allaah, I seek Your forgiveness so forgive me," without claiming repentance.

This is the case of someone who hasn't totally stopped committing the sin; his heart hasn't completely renounced it.

Muhammad Ibn Sawqah used to say when asking forgiveness, "I ask forgiveness from Allaah, the Magnificent, other than Whom there's no god, the Ever-Living, the Controller of everything. And I ask Him for a sincere repentance."

It's reported that Hudhayfah said, "It's sufficient enough as a lie for someone to say, 'I seek Allaah's forgiveness,' yet he keeps returning to the same sin."

Mutarraf once heard a man saying, "I seek forgiveness from Allaah and I repent to Him." So he was irritated and said, "Perhaps you shouldn't say this."

By this, it may be understood that it's disliked (by some) that one should say, "I repent to Allaah." This may be because true, sincere repentance is one in which the repentant never returns to commit the sin again. Therefore, if he does commit the same sin again, then at that time his statement, "I repent to You," would in fact become a lie.

Likewise, Muhammad Ibn Ka'b Al-Qurathee was asked about a person vowing to Allaah that he would never disobey Him again. To this he replied, "Who would be a worse sinner than he? He swears an oath to Allaah that His Decree will never be carried out upon him!?"

Abu Al-Faraj Ibn Al-Jawzee supported his statement in this and it's been reported that Sufyaan Ibn 'Uyaynah made a similar statement.

Despite this, the majority of scholars are still of the opinion that it's permissible for the repentant servant to say, "I repent to Allaah." And he may also promise Allaah to never return to a particular act of disobedience because such a determination and intention is already obligated upon him in the first place (i.e. the intention not to sin). For this determination, Allaah said to the one who kept returning to sins, "I have forgiven My servant so let him do as he pleases."<sup>15</sup>

Another supporting evidence of the permissibility of saying this is the Hadeeth that mentions the supplication for someone to say when concluding any sitting. In it, the Prophet (ﷺ) concluded by saying:

أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ

"I seek Your forgiveness and I repent to You."<sup>16</sup>

The best way for person to ask for forgiveness is to start by praising his Lord, then to confess the sin, and then ask for Allaah's forgiveness. An example of this is in the Hadeeth of Shaddaad Ibn Aws (رضي الله عنه) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

سَيِّدُ الْأَسْتِغْفَارِ أَنْ تَقُولَ اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ وَأَنَا عَلَى  
عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا صَنَعْتُ أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَأَبُوءُ  
لَكَ بِذُنُوبِي فَاعْفِرْ لِي فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

"The best way to seek forgiveness is to say (*transliteration below*), 'Oh Allaah, You are my Lord. There's no god worthy of worship but You. You created me and I am Your servant. And I abide by Your covenant and promise as much as I'm able. I seek refuge with You from the evil of what I've done, I acknowledge before You Your favors on me,

<sup>15</sup> See the Hadeeth that was mentioned on pg. 9 (footnote no. 11). [T.N]

<sup>16</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by An-Nasaaee (no. 1344), Abou Daawood (no. 4857), At-Tirmidhee (no. 3433), and others. *Shaykh* Al-Albaanee said it is authentic in "Saheeh Sunan An-Nasaaee" (no. 1275).

and I confess to You my sin. So, forgive me, because for sure no one can forgive sins except You.”<sup>17</sup>

*(Allaahumma Anta Rabee, laa ilaaha illaa Anta. Khalaqtanee wa Anaa 'Abduka, wa Anaa 'alaa 'ahdika wa wa'dika mastata'tu. A'oothu bika min sharri maa sana'tu. Aboou laka bini'matika 'alayya, wa aboou laka bithanbee. Faghfir lee fainnahu laa yaghfiru aththunooba illaa Anta.)*

'Abdullaah Ibn 'Amr (رضي الله عنه) narrated that Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq (رضي الله عنه) said, “Oh Messenger of Allaah, teach me a supplication that I may use in my prayer.” He (رضي الله عنه) replied:

قُلْ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي ظُلْمًا كَثِيرًا وَلَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ فَاعْفِرْ لِي مَغْفِرَةً  
مِنْ عِنْدِكَ وَأَرْحَمْنِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Say (*transliteration below*), “Oh Allaah, I've certainly wronged myself with much transgression. And no one except You forgives sins. So, forgive me with forgiveness from Yourself and have mercy on me. Surely You are the Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”<sup>18</sup>

*(Allaahumma innee thalamtu nafsee thulman katheeran. Wa laa yaghfiru ath-thunooba illaa Anta. Faghfir lee maghfiratan min i'ndika, warhamnee. Innaka Anta Al-Ghafoor, Ar-Raheem.)*

And also from the reported ways to ask forgiveness is that a servant says:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

“I ask forgiveness from Allaah, the greatest, other than Whom there's no god worthy of worship, the Ever-Living, the Controller of everything. And I repent to Him.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 6306, 6323), At-Tirmidhee (no. 3393), An-Nasaaee (no. 5522), and others. The remainder of the *Hadeeth* is, “And whoever says it during the day, being sincere and certain in it, should he die during the day before nightfall, he is from the people of Paradise. And whoever says it during the night, being sincere and certain in it, should he die before he reaches the morning, he is from the people of Paradise.”

<sup>18</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 834, 6326, 7388), Muslim (no. 2705), At-Tirmidhee (no. 3531), An-Nasaaee (no. 1302), Ibn Maajah (no. 3835), and others.

<sup>19</sup> **Saheeh:** Recorded by At-Tirmidhee (no. 3397, 3577), Aboo Daawood (no. 1517), and Al-Haakim said it is authentic and Ath-Thahabee agreed. Al-Albaanee said it is authentic in “Saheeh Sunan At-Tirmidhee” (no. 2831).

(Astaghfirullaah Al-'Atheem allathee laa ilaaha illaa Huwa, Al-Hayyu, Al-Qayyoom. Wa atoobu ilahi)

It's recorded in "Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree" from Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ فِي الْيَوْمِ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً

By Allaah, I ask Allaah's forgiveness and repent to Him during the day more than seventy times.<sup>20</sup>

And in "Saheeh Muslim," from Al-Agharr Al-Muzanee that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

إِنَّهُ لَيُغَانُ عَلَى قَلْبِي وَإِنِّي لَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ

Certainly my heart becomes preoccupied, but I seek Allaah's forgiveness a hundred times in a day.<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion, the remedy for sins is to seek forgiveness. And whoever's sins become too numerous for him to even count, then let him still ask Allaah's forgiveness, for surely Allaah knows everything and counts everything as He says:

﴿يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا أَحْصَاهُ اللَّهُ وَنَسُوهُ﴾

**On the day when Allaah will resurrect them all and inform them of what they did.**

**Allaah had counted it, while they forgot it.**

[Soorah Al-Mujaadilah, 58:6]

<sup>20</sup> Saheeh: Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 6307).

<sup>21</sup> Saheeh: Recorded by Muslim (no. 2702) and Abu Daawood (no. 1515).

## The Third Way: Tawheed

The third way to obtain forgiveness is by believing in Tawheed and in fact, it's the greatest way. Whoever loses Tawheed loses forgiveness, and whoever comes to Allaah with Tawheed has come with the greatest means of earning His forgiveness. Allaah (ﷻ) says:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ﴾

**Surely, Allaah does not forgive that others should be worshipped along with Him (shirk), but He forgives whatever is less than that to whom He wills.**

[Soorah An-Nisaa, 4:48]

Whoever comes with Tawheed and, along with it, the earth full of sins, Allaah will meet him with as much forgiveness. But it should be understood that this is Allaah's decision (ﷻ); if He wills, He may forgive him, or He may take him to account for his sins. However, the final result is that such a person (who has actualized and died upon Tawheed) will not remain forever in the Fire. Rather, he will be taken out and allowed to enter Paradise.

Some scholars said that the one who actualizes Tawheed will not even be thrown into the Fire as the disbelievers will, nor will he reside therein as disbelievers will. So, if a servant's Tawheed is complete and he's sincere to Allaah in it and fulfills all its conditions with his heart, tongue, and limbs, or with his heart and tongue at the time of his death, then that would secure for him complete forgiveness for all previous sins he committed. It would also prevent him from entering the Fire at all. So, whoever actualizes Tawheed with his heart completely empty of everything but Allaah out of love, honor, respect, fear, hope, and reliance, then that would remove all his sins and misdeeds even if they were as much as the foam of the sea. Perhaps they would even be exchanged for good deeds in their place as has been mentioned in the narrations of bad deeds being replaced with good ones.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> One particularly cool Hadeeth as an example of this is recorded by Muslim (no.190) and At-Tirmitheh (no. 2596) from Abu Tharr (رضي الله عنه) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

إِنِّي لَأَعْلَمُ آخِرَ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ دُخُولًا الْجَنَّةَ وَآخِرَ أَهْلِ النَّارِ خُرُوجًا مِنْهَا رَجُلٌ يُؤْتَى بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيُقَالُ اعْرَضُوا عَلَيْهِ صِعَارَ دُنُوبِهِ وَارْفَعُوا عَنْهُ كِبَارَهَا فَتُعْرَضُ عَلَيْهِ صِعَارُ دُنُوبِهِ فَيُقَالُ عَمِلْتَ يَوْمَ كَذَا وَكَذَا وَعَمِلْتَ يَوْمَ كَذَا وَكَذَا فَيَقُولُ نَعَمْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يَنْكِرَ وَهُوَ مُشْفِقٌ مِنْ كِبَارِ دُنُوبِهِ أَنْ تُعْرَضَ عَلَيْهِ فَيُقَالُ لَهُ فَإِنَّ لَكَ مَكَانَ كُلِّ سَيِّئَةٍ حَسَنَةً فَيَقُولُ رَبِّ قَدْ عَمِلْتُ أَشْيَاءَ لَا أَرَاهَا هَا هُنَا!

Undeniably, this Tawheed is the greatest medicine. If even a small amount was dropped on a mountain of sins and bad deeds, it would replace them all with good deeds.

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"I certainly know who'll be the last to enter Paradise and the last to be brought out of the Fire. He's a man who will be brought on the Day of Resurrection and it'll be said, 'Present to him his minor sins and take away his major ones. So, his minor sins will be placed before him.' He will be asked, 'On this day, did you do this and that, and on that day did you do this and that?' He'll reply, 'Yes.' He won't be able to deny. He'll be terrified that his major sins will also be presented to him. He will then be told, 'For you, every place of a sin will be replaced with a good deed.' The man will then say, 'Oh my Lord, I even did other things (sins) I don't see here!'"

I (Abu Tharr) then saw Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) laughing so much that I could see his back molar teeth. [T.N]