

Anas ibn Mālik narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

1

Every human being is prone to error,

2

and the best of those who err are the ones who turn to God in repentance.⁽¹⁾

From the Qur'an

- ❦ Those who, when they commit a gross indecency or wrong themselves, remember God and pray for the forgiveness of their sins - for who but God can forgive sins? - and do not knowingly persist in doing the wrong they may have done. ﴿3: 135﴾
- ❦ God will indeed accept the repentance of only those who do evil out of ignorance, and then repent shortly afterwards. It is they to whom God turns in His mercy. God is all-knowing, wise. ﴿4: 17﴾
- ❦ Excepted, however, shall be they who repent, attain to faith, and do righteous deeds, for God will transform their bad deeds into good ones. God is indeed much-forgiving, ever-merciful. ﴿25: 70﴾
- ❦ Say: '[Thus speaks God]: You servants of Mine who have transgressed against their own souls! Do not despair of God's mercy: God forgives all sins; He alone is much-forgiving, ever-merciful'. (53) Turn towards your Lord and submit to Him before the suffering comes upon you, for then you cannot be helped. ﴿39: 53-54﴾
- ❦ It is He who accepts the repentance of His servants and who pardons bad deeds. He knows everything you do. ﴿42: 25﴾

The Narrator

Abu Ḥamzah Anas ibn Mālik ibn al-Naḍr of the Anṣār was a distinguished scholar, mufti, excellent reciter of the Qur'an and a leading scholar of Hadith. He was the chronicler of Islam. He was the servant of God's Messenger and his household. Anas was the last of the Prophet's companions to die in Basrah. He was only ten years of age when the Prophet migrated to Madinah, and he was 20 when the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed away. He remained very close to the Prophet from his early days in Madinah to the end of his blessed life. Anas took part in several military expeditions with the Prophet, and he took part in the pledge given to the Prophet (peace be upon him) known as the pledge under the tree. He reported a wealth of knowledge from the Prophet. God's Messenger prayed to God to give him plenty of wealth and offspring. His date trees used to yield fruit twice a year. He died in Year 93 AH 712 CE.

Summary

Every human being commits sins and acts of disobedience. None is infallible other than the prophets. However, the best of people is those who turn to God in repentance shortly after they make an error.

1 Related by Ahmad, 13049; al-Tirmidhī, 354; Ibn Mājah, 4251.



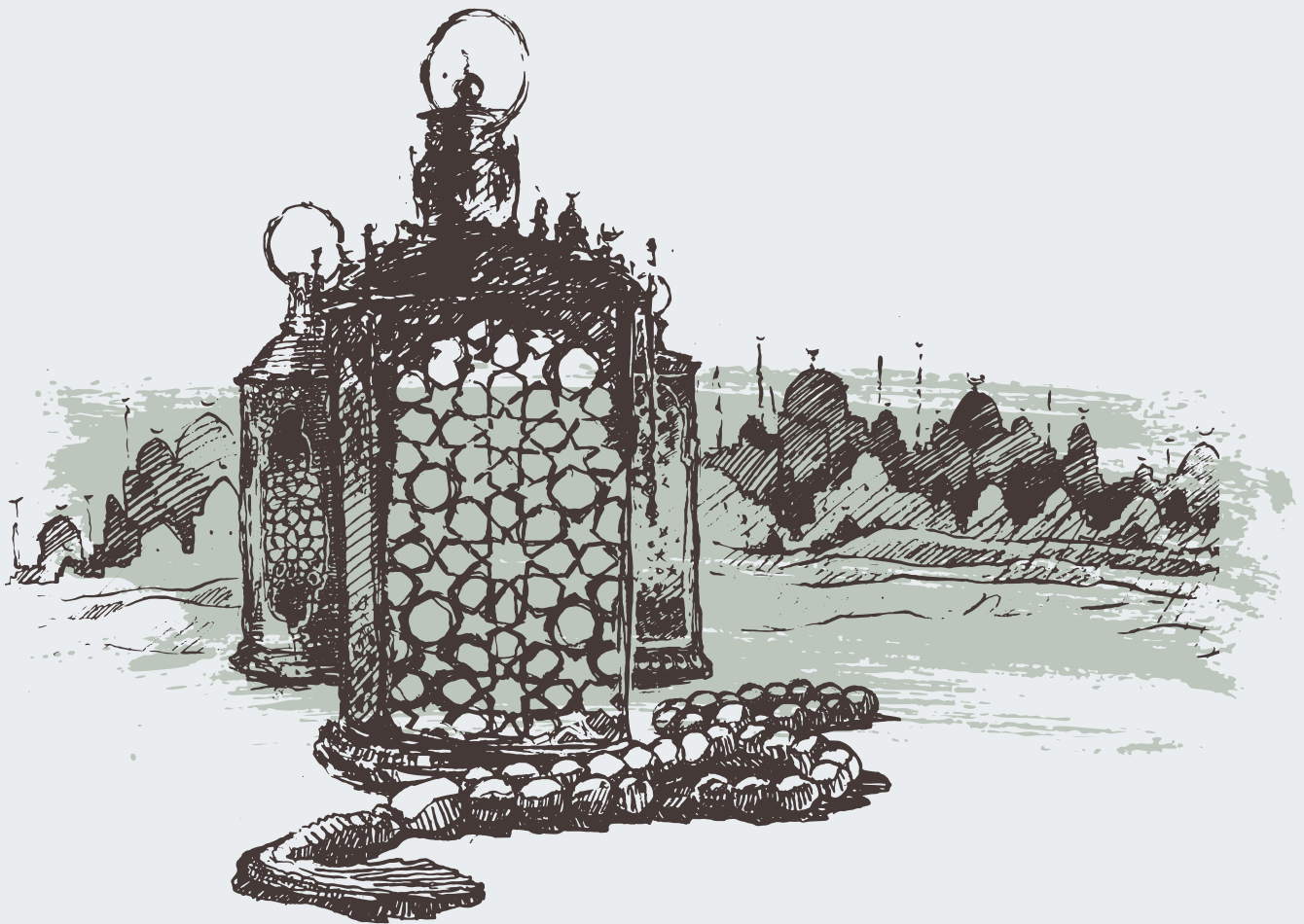
Message and Meaning

1

By nature man is weak. He has to strive against his personal desires, worldly pleasures and the temptations placed in his way by Satan. Faced with such a struggle, man will inevitably commit some sins. Hence, the Prophet states that all human beings frequently err and commit sin. No one is spared such temptation other than the prophets.

2

This does not mean that a person considers himself free to commit sin. The Prophet makes it clear that the best of people is those who often repent and turn to God, seeking His forgiveness. Whenever a believer commits an act of disobedience of God, he regrets it, acknowledges his error, and turns to God in repentance. He does not persist with his sin. Describing His God-fearing servants, God says: 'Those who, when they commit a gross indecency or wrong themselves, remember God and pray for the forgiveness of their sins - for who but God can forgive sins? - and do not knowingly persist in doing the wrong they may have done'. (3: 135)





Implementation

1

It is wrong to shame anyone for a sin he may commit. Every human being is prone to error.

2

It is wrong to persist with one's sinful action, only because everybody else does so. The sins of others do not justify anyone committing a sin.

3

No one should despair of God's mercy because he has committed many sins. Had God willed to have servants that do not disobey Him, He would have created us like angels. The Prophet says: 'By Him who holds my soul in His hand, were you not to sin, God would have taken you away and brought into existence others who would commit sins, and appeal for God's forgiveness, and He would forgive them'.⁽¹⁾

4

Beware of dismissing sins and considering them trivial, because this encourages persistence with the sin and lack of repentance. Ibn 'Abbās said: 'You, sinner, should not feel safe of the evil consequences of sin. What follows a sin is worse than the sinful act itself if you but knew it. The fact that you show those on your right and left that you are not ashamed of your sin as you commit it is more serious than the sin you have committed. That you laugh while you do not know what God will do to you is worse than the sin. Your delight at what you achieve as you commit your sin is worse than the sin. Your regret for not being able to commit the sin you intended is worse than the sin. That you fear the wind when you open your gate while committing your sin, but you remain unperturbed by the fact that God sees you is worse than the sin itself'.⁽²⁾

5

Turn quickly to God in repentance whenever you commit a sinful action. Never despair of receiving God's mercy. In a sacred, or qudsī, hadith, God says: 'My servants, you sin by night and by day, and I forgive all sins, so seek forgiveness from Me and I shall forgive you'.⁽³⁾

6

When God wants to bestow goodness on a person, He opens for him the way of humility and frequently seeking God's help and forgiveness. He enables him to realize how much he needs such help, and see his own faults, ignorance, and transgression. He also enables him to appreciate God's grace, bounty, mercy, generosity. He realizes that God has no need for anyone, and he praises Him for His bounty.

1 Related by Muslim, 2749.

2 Abu Nu'aym al-Aṣḥabānī, Ḥilyat al-Awliyā', Vol. 1, p. 324.

3 Related by Muslim, 2577.

7

No matter how grave one's sin is and how numerous his sinful actions are, God is always pleased when His servant turns to Him in repentance. The Prophet says: 'God is more delighted when His believer servant turns to Him in repentance than one travelling through a barren, dangerous land, having his camel which carries his food and drink. He goes to sleep, then wakes up to find that his camel has gone. He looks for it everywhere, but he gets very thirsty. He thinks I better go back to the place where I was, and sleep until death overtakes me. He places his head over his arm expecting death. He then wakes up to find his camel standing close and carrying his belongings, food, and drink. God is more delighted with the repentance of His believing servant than such a person is delighted to have back his mount and supplies'. ⁽¹⁾

8

Genuine repentance presupposes regret for offending God. One should never boast about sins, even though one has repented for having done them.

9

A person may repent and then commit the same sin again. That one does this several times should not deter a person from turning to God again in repentance. What is important is to have the genuine intention to repent and never to commit the same sin again. That a person errs again and commits the same sin should not be a deterrent preventing him from repentance. In fact, he should make an effort and repent again. The Prophet said: 'A servant of God committed a sin. He then said: My Lord, forgive me my sin. God, Blessed and Exalted, said: "My servant has committed a sin and has known that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for sins". Then he sinned again and said: My Lord, forgive me my sin. God, Blessed and Exalted, said: "My servant has committed a sin and has known that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for sins". Then he sinned again and said: My Lord, forgive me my sin. God, Blessed and Exalted, said: "My servant has committed a sin and has known that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for sins. Do as you wish; I have forgiven you"'.

10

No Muslim should ever think that his sin will not be forgiven. To do so is to deny what God says about His mercy: 'My grace encompasses all things'. (7: 156)

11

The conditions for genuine repentance are: 1) regretting committing a sin; 2) refraining from doing it; 3) resolving not to redo it; and 4) if the sin involves other people's rights, then giving them their due or what compensates them.

12

Repentance does not only wipe away sins, but it also transforms them into good deeds. A genuine repentant should be delighted by having his sins effaced and his good deeds increased.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 6308; Muslims, 2744.

