

'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ narrated:

1

When God turned my heart towards Islam I went to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: 'Put out your right hand to accept my pledge'.

2

He put out his right hand, but I held back my hand. He said: 'What is the matter, 'Amr?' I said that I wanted to make a condition. He said: 'What condition is that?' I said: 'That I am forgiven'.

3

He said: 'Do you not know that Islam demolishes what went on before it?

4

And that migration wipes away what went before it?

5

And that the pilgrimage wipes away what went before it?'⁽¹⁾

1 Related by Muslim, 121.

From the Qur'an

﴿Say to the unbelievers that if they desist, all that is past shall have forgiven them.﴾ (8: 38)

The Narrator

Abu 'Abdullāh 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ ibn Wā'il of the Sahl branch of the Quraysh tribe was one of the most intelligent and clever of the Arabs. Prior to embracing Islam, the Quraysh sent him as an envoy to Negus, requesting him to extradite the Muslim migrants who sought refuge in Abyssinia. He embraced Islam in Year 8 AH, 629 CE, six months before the takeover of Makkah. He migrated to Madinah to join the Prophet (peace be upon him) who made him commander of the military expedition known as Dhāt al-Salāsīl. 'Umar appointed him commander of the army which conquered Egypt. He died in Year 43 AH, 664 CE.

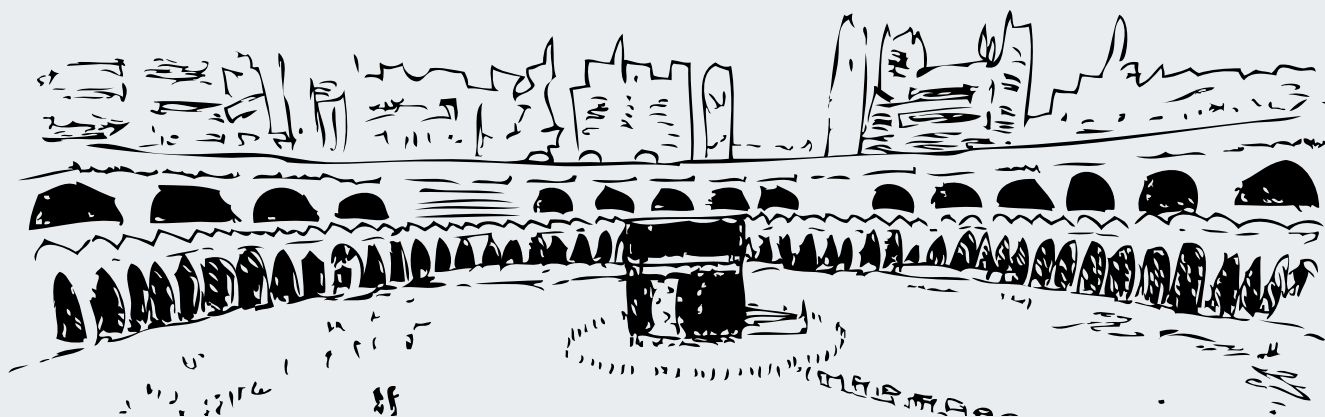
Summary

'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ feared that he might be accountable for what he did before embracing Islam. He wanted to establish that he would be forgiven all the sins that he had committed earlier. The Prophet told him that embracing Islam ensures that all past sins are forgiven.



Message and Meaning

- 1** When God let 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ's bosom open wide to receive Islam, he came to the Prophet and asked him to put up his hand so that he would pledge his allegiance to him as a Muslim, as this was the normal way of pledging allegiance.
- 2** However, when the Prophet put up his hand, 'Amr held back his hand. The Prophet was amazed that he immediately stopped and asked him the reason why he had done so. 'Amr said that he wanted to establish a condition before giving his pledge. The condition he wanted to stipulate was that God would forgive him his past sins and his opposition to Islam.
- 3** The Prophet (peace be upon him) gave him the good news that when a person embraces Islam, all his past sins and his former disbelief are wiped away.
- 4** Likewise, migration from a land of disbelief to the land of Islam wipes away all past sins. In the early period of Islam, this meant migration to Madinah to join the Prophet (peace be upon him). With the takeover of Makkah, migration meant leaving the land of disbelief to join the land of Islam, wherever this happens to be. The hadith that says: 'No migration after the takeover [of Makkah]',⁽¹⁾ means that there was no longer a migration from Makkah to Madinah, because the people of Makkah embraced Islam and had become part of the land of Islam. Migration means leaving the land of war or the land of disbelief.
- 5** The same is true of hajj, or pilgrimage. Performing the hajj wipes away all past sins, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'Whoever performs the hajj and commits neither lewdness nor wicked conduct returns as pure as on the day of his birth'.⁽²⁾



1 Related by al-Bukhari, 2783; Muslim, 1353.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 1521; Muslim, 1320.

Implementation



If you feel inclined to do some good deed, or voluntary act of worship, go ahead and do it, with neither hesitation nor delay.



When 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ recognized God's guidance to Islam, he cared little for his status and position in the Quraysh, which he was bound to lose. He realized that he would be just one among the Muslims. The proper attitude for a Muslim is to follow the truth and not to care for anything else.



Shaking hands with one's Muslim brother is a sunnah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to accept people's pledges of allegiance shaking hands with them. As for a man shaking hands with a woman who is not one of his closest relatives, it is not permissible. 'Ā'ishah said: 'By God, God's Messenger's hand never touched a woman's hand at all. He accepted their pledge of allegiance verbally. By God, God's Messenger never stipulated any condition on women except as God had commanded. He would say to them: I accept your pledges'.⁽¹⁾



'Amr ibn al-Āṣ did not make his acceptance of Islam conditional on his appointment as commander of an army or governor of any conquered province or city or receiving a sum of money. All he wanted was to be forgiven his past. Every Muslim should make it his topmost priority to earn God's forgiveness, obtain a higher grade and enter into Heaven. He should not think of worldly luxuries.



Educators, scholars and advocates of Islam should encourage people to accept Islam and explain that when they do, it wipes away their past sins.



Embracing Islam wipes away past sins if the new Muslim does well and abides by Islamic rules. If he does not do well and commits many sins, including major ones, after becoming Muslim, without turning to God in repentance, he will be accountable for all. The Prophet says: 'Whoever does well in Islam will not have to account for what he did in pre-Islamic days; but whoever does badly in Islam will be accountable for his earlier and later actions'.⁽²⁾



Islamic benevolence includes that when a person embraces Islam the sins he committed previously are wiped away, but his previous good deeds are credited to him and he will have their reward granted to him by God, the Lord of all the worlds.



Although we have missed out on migration because Islam is predominant in our countries, the greater migration is achieved by being constant in good deeds, abandoning sinful action and dissociating from deviant creeds and their followers.



A Muslim should perform the hajj and the 'umrah frequently, if he can, because they erase past sins, making a person as sinless as he was on the day of his birth.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 5288; Muslim, 1866.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 6921; Muslim, 120.

