

Stories of Repentance

In the Name of Allâh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

INTRODUCTION

All praise is for Allah, Lord of all that exists. O Allah, send prayers and salutations upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, his companions, and all those who follow his way until the Last Day.

Allah said:

الرَّحِيمُ الْغَفُورُ هُوَ إِنَّهُ جَمِيعًا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَحْمَةً مِنْ تَقَنُّطُوا لَا أَنْفُسِهِمْ عِلْدَ أَسْرَفُوا الَّذِينَ عِبَادِي يَا قُلْ

Say: "O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

[az-Zumar : 53]

Indeed, Allah has opened the door of repentance to every sinner. The Prophet said, "Oh people, repent to Allah, for indeed, I repent to Allah 100 times every day"

[Muslim : 2702]

It is truly encouraging to know that the door to repentance is always open, but what is more, Allah is actually happy when one of His slaves repents. It is important to note here that the keys to repentance are that a sinner must desert from his sin, feel regret for having perpetrated it, and then make a firm resolve not to return to it.

Who among us does not sin? And who among us does all that is required of him in the religion? It is an undeniable fact that we all have shortcomings; what distinguishes some of us from the others, what raises some of us above the others, is that the successful ones among us are those who repent their sins and ask Allah to forgive them. Sadly, some people are guilty of thinking in this manner: "Those I see around me perpetrate minor sins, while I am guilty of perpetrating major sins, so what is the use of repenting?!" True, such a person does well by finding fault with his own self, yet he makes a grave, ruinous error when he loses hope, when he underestimates Allah's Forgiveness and Mercy. To be sure, the door of repentance is open both to the perpetrator of minor sins and to the perpetrator of major sins.

In regard to repentance, the following beautiful hadith should inspire hope in us all:

Ibn Mas'ud narrated that the Prophet said:

"Indeed, Allah is more happy with the repentance of His slave than a man who stops in a barren, desolate land; with him he has his riding animal. He then goes to sleep. When he wakes up, [he realizes

that] his mount is gone. He searches for it until he is on the verge of dying. He then says, ‘I will return to the place wherein I lost it, and I will die there.’ He went to that place, and he was then overcome by sleep. When he woke up, his mount was [standing] right beside his head: on it was his food, his drink, his provisions, and the things he needed. Allah is more happy with the repentance of his believing slave than the aforementioned man when he finds his mount and his provisions.”

[al-Bukhaari: 6308 ; Muslim: 2744]

This hadith clearly illustrates that no one should become so hopeless that he refrains from repenting to Allah. Glad tidings, then, to every Muslim who constantly and consistently hastens to repent to Allah and to ask for his forgiveness.

THE MERCY OF ALLAH

“Among those who came before you was a man who killed 99 people. He then asked to be guided to the most prolific worshipper from the inhabitants of the earth, and he was directed to a monk. He went to him and told him that he had killed 99 people, and he asked whether it was possible for him to repent. The monk said, ‘No.’ The man killed him, thus making him the 100th victim. He then asked to be directed to the most knowledgeable of the Earth’s inhabitants, and he was guided to a scholar. He went to him and told him that he had killed 100 people, and he asked whether it was possible for him to repent. The scholar said, ‘Yes, and who will stand between you and repentance. Go to such and such land, for in it dwell a people who worship Allah, so go and worship Allah with them. And do not return to your land, for it is indeed a land of evil.’ He left, and when he reached the halfway point of his journey, he died. The angels of Mercy and the angels of Punishment disputed with one another [in regard to his case]. The angels of Mercy said, ‘He came to us repentant, advancing with his heart towards Allah.’ The angels of Punishment said, ‘Indeed, he never performed any good deeds.’ Then an angel came in the form of a human being, and both groups of angels asked him to be the judge between them. He said, ‘Measure the distance between the two lands. Whichever land he is closer to is the land that he is closer to [in terms of being of its people]. They then measured the distance and found that he was closer to the land that he was heading towards, and so it was the angels of Mercy who then took his soul.”

[al-Bukhaari: 3470 ; Muslim: 2766]

WOE UNTO YOU, O DINAAR

There is an interesting story related about Dinaar al-‘Ayaar. Dinaar had a righteous mother who would constantly advise him to repent for his wayward, sinful existence, but as much as she tried, her words had no positive effect on him whatsoever. Then, one day, as he was walking by a graveyard, he stopped to pick up a bone. He was shocked to see how it crumbled and turned to dust in his hand. The sight of that bone had a profound effect on Dinaar. He began to think about his life and his past sins, and he then exclaimed, “Woe unto you, O Dinaar, you are going to end up like this crushed bone, and your body will turn into dust.” All of his past sins then flashed before his eyes, and he made a firm resolve to repent. Turning his gaze towards the sky, he said, “My Lord, I now turn to you in complete submission, so accept me and have Mercy on me.”

With a completely changed heart and state of mind, Dinaar went to his mother and said, “Mother, what does a master do when he captures his slave who had run away from him?” She said, “[To punish him] the master provides him with coarse clothing and low-quality food; and he ties his hands and feet so

that he does not make another attempt to escape.” Dinaar said, “Then I want a garment made of coarse wool, low-quality barley, and two chains. Mother, do with me that which is done with a runaway slave. Perhaps my Lord will, upon seeing my humiliation and humility, have mercy on me.” Seeing that her son was adamant and resolute in his request, she complied.

At the beginning of every ensuing night, Dinaar would begin to cry and wail uncontrollably. And he would continue to repeat to himself the words, “Woe unto you, O Dinaar, do you have the power to withstand the Hell fire? How brazen you have been to have led a life that has made you deserving of the anger of the All-Mighty!” He would continue upon that state until the morning.

Turning wan and pale, Dinaar’s body slowly wasted away. Not being able to bear seeing him in that pitiable state, his mother said, “My son, be easy on yourself.” He answered, “My mother, let me remain tied for a short while, so that perhaps I can achieve long-term comfort later on. For tomorrow, I will be waiting a long time before my Majestic Lord, and I do not know whether He will order me to go to places of beautiful shade or to places of unspeakable horror.”

She said, “My son, at least rest for a while.” He said, “It is not present rest or comfort that I am seeking out. Mother, it is as if I see you and other people being led tomorrow towards Paradise, while I am being led towards the Hell-fire along with his inhabitants.” She left him then, and he returned to crying, worshipping, and reciting the Quran. One night, as he was reciting the Quran, he came across these verses:

يَعْمَلُونَ ۖ كَانُوا عَمَّا أَجْمَعِينَ لَنَسْأَلَنَّهُمْ فَوَرِّتَكَ

So, by your Lord [o Muhammad], We shall certainly call all of them to account, for all that they used to do.

[al-Hijr : 92-93]

As he contemplated the meanings and implications of these verses, he cried with such intensity that he fainted. His mother rushed to him and tried very hard to revive him, but he wouldn’t respond. She thought he had died. Looking into the face of her son, she said, “O my beloved one, O the joy of my heart, where shall we meet again?” In fact, Dinaar still had some life left in him, and hearing his mother’s words, he answered with a faint voice, “My mother, if you do not find me on the wide plains of the Day of Resurrection, then ask Maalik, the Custodian of Hell-fire about me.” He then made a croaking sound and died.

After she finished washing his body, Dinaar’s mother prepared him for his funeral. She then went out and made the announcement, “O people, come to the funeral prayer of one who has been killed by [fear of] the Hell-fire.” People began to come from all directions. It is said that during that era, no greater gathering came together and no amount of tears were shed as much as on that day.

On the same night that his funeral was held, one of Dinaar’s friends saw him in a dream, attired in a green robe. Dinaar was prancing around in Paradise, all the while reciting the verse:

يَعْمَلُونَ ۖ كَانُوا عَمَّا أَجْمَعِينَ لَنَسْأَلَنَّهُمْ فَوَرِّتَكَ

So, by your Lord [o Muhammad], We shall certainly call all of them to account, for all that they used to do.

During the dream, his friend heard him say, “By His Might and Majesty, He asked me [about my deeds].

Having mercy on me, He forgave me and pardoned me [my sins.] Lo! Convey news of this to my mother.”

COMING TO TERMS WITH THE REALITY OF LIFE

It is reported that there was once a king who, at a certain moment during his rule, came to the realization that no matter how rich he was, his pleasures were of the fleeting kind and his end was going to be death. These thoughts lingered in his mind, until one day he secretly left his castle and made his way towards the seaside. There, he spent his days earning his keep by working with bricks, and his nights worshipping Allah. Although he had traveled far away from his homeland, he could not remain unrecognized for long, and soon news of his story reached the king of the land that he was in. That king summoned him, but he refused to go; and when he was summoned for a second time, he made it clear that he didn't want to meet the king.

The king of the land was too curious about the former king's story to let the matter rest there. And so he went to him in person, but when the former king saw him approaching, he began to run away. The king of the land chased him as he called out, “O slave of Allah, fear not,” but the former king continued to flee from him. This continued until the king of the land was able to convince him that he just wanted to talk to him for a few moments. When the two were face to face, the king of the land asked the former king, “What made you come to this land?”

He said, “I found that my heart desired separation from the children of Adam.”

The king of the land asked, “How can you bear living a life of loneliness?”

He said, “Whoever finds comfort with Allah finds unwholesome the company of anyone else.”

The king of the land asked, “And why did you leave your realm?”

He answered, “I thought about my outcome, my final destination on this earth, and I realized that my end here was near at hand. And so I decided to turn away from that which is temporary and to instead turn towards that which will abide forever. Turning to my Lord, I then fled from my sins.”

The king of the land said “You do not have more reason to fear Allah than I do.”

The king of that land then abdicated his throne, after which he followed his new companion on the path of simplicity, repentance, and worship.

YOU HAVE GUIDED ME TO A PATH THAT YOU KNOW NOT YOURSELVES

The following story is narrated by Abdul-Wahid bin Zaid:

“We were on a sea vessel once, when the wind suddenly became tempestuous, and we were forced to leave the high seas and seek refuge on an island. We were surprised to see that we were not alone on the island; there standing before us was a man who was busy worshipping an idol. We introduced ourselves and then said, ‘We do not have anyone on our ship that does as you are doing.’

The man asked, ‘Then who is it that you worship?’

We said, 'We worship Allah.'

He asked, 'And who is Allah?'

We said, 'He Whose Throne is in the Heavens and Whose dominion is in the heavens, the earth, and all that exists.'

'And how did you come to know that?' asked the man.

'He sent a messenger to us with clear proofs and miracles, and it was that messenger who informed us about Him.'

'And what has happened to your messenger?'

'When he finished conveying the message, Allah caused him to die,' we answered.

'Has he left you no sign?' the man asked.

'He has left among us Allah's Book,' we said.

'Show it to me,' requested the man.

When we showed him a copy of the Quran, he said, 'I cannot read it,' and so we read a part of it for him.

He then cried and said, 'The One Whose speech this is must not be disobeyed.' Not only did the man then accept Islam, he also assiduously learned its teachings and then put what he learned into practice.

When the weather calmed down and we were ready to leave the island, he asked us if he could be a passenger on our ship. We of course agreed to have him join us, and it was a good thing that he came with us, for it gave us the opportunity to teach him a number of chapters of the Quran. At the end of the first evening of travel, all of us crewmen got ready to go to sleep. Our new passenger said, 'O people, the Lord that you guided me to, does He sleep?'

We said, '*He is the Ever Living, the One who sustains and protects all that exists. Neither slumber nor sleep overtake Him.*'

He looked at us and said, 'It is indeed bad manners for a slave to sleep in the presence of his master.' With a great deal of energy and vigor, he then jumped up and began to pray; and his crying voice could be heard until the morning.

When we reached a place caled 'Abaadaan [a place situated in present-day Iran], I said to my companions, 'This man is a stranger here, moreover, he is a new Muslim. We would do well to gather some money for him in order to help him out.' We gathered what we could, but when we tried to give him the money, he exclaimed, 'What is this!'

We said, 'Money that you can spend on yourself.'

He said, 'How perfect Allah is! You have guided me to a way that you do not know yourselves. When I was living on a barren desert in the middle of the ocean, I worshipped other than Him, yet He did not allow me to go without; then *how is it possible that He will make me be needy, when it is Him alone that I now worship?* Indeed He is the Creator and the Provider.' He then left us and went on his way.

A number of days passed before we heard any news of his whereabouts. We were told he was in such

and such place and that he was extremely sick. When we reached him, we saw that he was on the verge of dying. After extending greetings of peace to him, I said, 'Do you need anything?'

He said, 'The One Who brought you to the island when I did not know Him has provided me with all that I need,' he said.

I sat down beside him, thinking that I could stay for a while and comfort him. I soon fell asleep, however, and saw a dream. In the graveyard of Abaadaan I saw the most beautiful girl that I have ever seen. She was saying, 'Hasten his burial, for it is a long time now that I have been yearning for him.' I woke up with a start and found that he had just died. I washed his body and enshrouded him. That night, after the burial had taken place, I saw another dream. In it, he was looking very handsome, and the same girl was sitting on the bed. Sitting beside her, he continued to repeat the verse:

الدَّارِ الْعُقبَىٰ فَنِعْمَ صَبَرْتُمْ بِمَا مُمْ عَلَيْكَ سَلَامٌ

Salaamun Alaykom for that you persevered in patience! Excellent indeed is the final home! "

[al-Ra'ad : 24]

[al-Mawaa'idh wal-Majaalis: 40-42]

THE TRUE TREASURE

A burglar scaled the wall of Maalik bin Dinar's house one night and easily managed to get inside. Once inside the house, the thief was disappointed to see that there was nothing inside actually worth stealing. The owner of the home was inside at the time, he was busy performing prayer. Realizing that he was not alone, Maalik quickly ended his prayer and turned around to face the thief. Without showing any sign of being shocked or afraid, Maalik calmly extended greetings of peace and then said, "My brother, may Allah forgive you. You entered my home and found nothing that is worth taking, yet I do not want you to leave my home without taking away some benefit."

He stood up, went to another part of the room, and came back with a jug full of water. He looked into the eyes of the burglar and said, "Make ablution and perform two units of prayer, for if you do so, you will leave my home with a greater treasure than you had initially sought when you entered it."

Much humbled by Maalik's manners and words, the thief said, "Yes, that is a generous offer indeed."

After making ablution and performing two units of prayer, the burglar said, "O Maalik, would you mind if I stayed for a while, for I want to stay to perform two more units of prayer?"

Maalik said, "Stay for whatever amount of prayer Allah decrees for you to perform now."

The thief ended up spending the entire night at Maalik's house. He continued to pray until the morning. Then Maalik said, "Leave now and be good."

But instead of leaving, the thief said, "Would you mind if I stayed here with you today, for I have made an intention to fast the day?"

"Stay as long as you wish," said Maalik.

The burglar ended up staying for a number of days, praying during the late hours of each night and fasting throughout the duration of each day. When he finally decided to leave, the burglar said, "O Maalik, I have made a firm resolve to repent for my sins and for my former way of life."

Maalik said, "Indeed, that is in the Hand of Allah."

The man did mend his ways and began to lead a life of righteousness and obedience to Allah. Later on, He came across another burglar he knew. [His friend] said to him, "Have you found your treasure yet?"

He said, "My brother, what I found is Maalik bin Dinaar. I went to steal from him, but it was he who ended up stealing my heart. I have indeed repented to Allah, and I will remain at the door [of His Mercy and Forgiveness] until I achieve what his obedient, loving slaves have achieved."

[al-Mawaa'idh wal-Majaalis: 85]

THE ACCEPTED REPENTANCE

A man once went to Raabi'ah bint Isma'il al-'Adawiyyah, who was known by the titles, 'Mother of Goodness,' and, 'The Famous Worshipper.' He said, 'Indeed, I have perpetrated a great number of sins. If I repent, do you think that Allah will accept my repentance?'

She said, "Woe unto you! Do you not see that He invites those who turn away from Him; then why wouldn't He accept the repentance of those who turn towards Him?"

GOOD ADVICE

During one of his journeys, Sari as-Saqati passed by a cave, from which he heard continuous sobbing. Aroused by curiosity, he entered the cave and saw a young man whose body seemed to be wasted away by grief and sadness. Having immediately perceived that the man was a righteous worshipper, Sari humbly asked, "O young man, how is safety achieved?"

He said, "By performing all prescribed acts of worship, by not wronging others, and by repenting to Allah."

Sari asked, "Can you please deliver a sermon to me?"

The young man said, "The best sermon you can receive is by looking into your own self. But I will say this: be obedient to Allah when you are alone, for doing so will atone for your sins, and Allah will then display you to the inhabitants of the heavens."

ONE SIN LED TO HIS REPENTANCE

A righteous man was once asked to tell the story of the pivotal moment of his life, the moment in which he first began to apply the teachings of Islam, and the following was his answer:

When I was a young man, I would not hesitate to perpetrate any sin that was made available to me. Then, one day, I saw a young woman who was perhaps the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. Much tempted by her, I indicated to her that I wanted her to approach me. She seemed nervous, but I thought that she would probably agree to satisfy my sexual desires for money. She approached me with what seemed to be a great deal of trepidation, and when she actually stood before me, she looked extremely terrified.

Feeling sorry for her, I said, 'Do not fear, for I will not harm you.'

But my words did not lessen her terrible fright in the least; in fact, her situation worsened. She began to tremble like a palm tree leaf trembles with the wind.

I said, 'Tell me your story.'

She said, 'By Allah, o my brother, never before this day have I offered my body in this way. Dire need is what has driven me to this, for I have three daughters who have not eaten a single morsel of food for three days now. It was pity for them that brought me to this low point in my life.'

For the first time in my life, I felt pity; her story moved me, and I no longer entertained the intention of taking advantage of her. After she told me where she lived, I took a great deal of money, clothing and food to her house. When I returned to my house, I told my mother what had happened.

My mother knew that I had a book in which I would record all of my evil deeds, and so she said to me, 'My son, you are a man who has never performed a good deed except for the good deed that you performed today. I know that you have a book in which you record your evil exploits, go now and write in it your good deed.'

I stood up, went to my book, opened it, and found that all of its pages were blank- except for the first page on which was written a single line.

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ بِنِذْهُ السَّيِّئَاتِ
Verily, the good deeds remove the evil deeds (i.e. small sins)
[Hud : 114]

At that very moment, I raised my hands to the sky and said, 'By your Might and Majesty, never again will I disobey You.' “

THE GRAVE OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN

Ibrahim bin Bashaar narrated this story:

"While I was walking towards Kufah with Ibrahim bin Adham, he stopped beside a grave and invoked

Allah to have mercy on its dweller. "Whose grave is this," I asked.

'It is the grave of Humaid bin Jaabir,' said Ibrahim. 'He was once the leader of all the townships that are in this area.'

'What was so special about him?' I asked. Ibrahim told me that he was a very rich leader who would spend his nights enjoying frivolous games and entertainment.

'One night he fell asleep and saw a dream in which a man was standing over his head,' said Ibrahim. 'The man had a book in his hand, which Humaid grabbed and tore open. The words inside were written with gold [ink]. They ran as follows:

Do not prefer my Fire over my Light, and do not be deceived by what you own in this world, for what you own is preventing you from getting what is saved for you in the afterlife. True, what you have might have been called a kingdom, had it not been for the fact that it will all soon perish. And your life might have been called a life of happiness and joy, had it not been for the fact that it will be followed by anxiety and misery. So beware of falling under the spell of these worldly ornaments, or you will join the ranks of the destroyed ones

لِلْمُتَّقِينَ أُعِدَّتْ وَالْأَرْضُ السَّمَاوَاتُ عَرْضُهَا وَجَنَّةُ رَبِّكُمْ مِنْ مَغْفِرَةٍ إِلَى وَسَارِعُوا

And march forth in the way [which leads to] forgiveness from your Lord, and for Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth, prepared for al-muttaqoon.

[Aal-Imraan

:

133]

Humaid then woke up in a terrified state,' continued Ibrahim.

'Resigning from his post as leader, Humaid betook himself to this mountain, where he led a simple life, doing menial work to maintain his physical upkeep, but dedicating most of his time to the worship of Allah. I came here once and met him, by keeping company with him, I found him to be a noble man. I would thereafter continue to visit him until he died.'

[al-Mawaa'idh

wal-Majaalis:

179]

EVERYTHING THAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN IS NEAR AT HAND

The following is one of the famous sayings of al-Hasan, may Allah have mercy on him:

"Before He created us, Allah knew that we would sin and disobey Him, yet He still made us Muslims. O sinners, hurry to repent before the pangs of death overcome you, before the time of utter regret is upon you. Work, for death is coming, and everything that is coming is near at hand. Death hovers over you day and night; it will not come late, not even for one who has lost track of time."

LET US HASTEN TO REPENT

Death may come upon us at any time, and it is our last deed that counts most. Put together, these two realities make it clear that we must continually repent for our sins and that it is utter foolishness to put off repentance for another day.

In relation to this point, there is an interesting story related about two brothers. One of them, who lived on the top floor of a house they shared together, was a pious worshipper; the other, who lived on the ground floor, was a prolific doer of evil deeds. The former was confident- in fact, a little too confident and self-complacent for his own good. He actually desired that Shaytaan should try to tempt him, so that he could resist temptation and soar to higher levels of righteousness. One day, Iblees did appear before him, perhaps in the form of a man [it is not mentioned in the narration]. Shaytaan said, "So very sad that you have spent 40 years inhibiting the satisfaction of your desires and tiring your body in worship. You have 40 more years left to live, why don't you enjoy yourself and follow your lusts for a while. Then you can always repent and return to worship later on. After all, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Most-Merciful."

The worshipper thought to himself, "I will go down to my brother on the first floor, and I will join him in the pursuit of pleasure for 20 years. Then, in the last 20 years of my life, I will repent to Allah and worship Him." He then began to descend the stairs to the first floor.

Meanwhile, his brother was going through a transformation of his own. He thought to himself, "I wasted away my entire life in sin. My brother, the worshipper, will enter Paradise, while I will enter the Hell-fire. By Allah, I will indeed repent, go up to my brother and join him for as long as I live, in the worship of Allah. Perhaps Allah will then forgive me."

He ascended the stairs, with the intention of repenting to Allah, while his brother was descending with the intention of leading a life of sin. The latter slipped on one of the stairs, tumbled down, and knocked down his brother. Both of them died.

It is, of course, the last deed that counts most.

MERCY AND FORGIVENESS FOR THE ONE WHO REPENTS

When al-Mansur bin 'Ammar, may Allah have mercy on him, once entered the court of Abdul-Malik bin Marwaan, the latter said, "O Mansur, I have a question for you, and I will give you respite for an entire year to answer it: Who is the wisest of people, and who is the most ignorant of people?"

Al-Mansur left the castle and spent some time in contemplation in a nearby courtyard. Then the answer came to him, and so he quickly hurried back to Abdul-Malik. "O Mansur, why have you returned?" asked Abdul Malik.

"The wisest of the people, O Leader of the Believers, is the doer of good deeds who fears not having his deeds accepted," said al-Mansur. "And the most ignorant of people is he who does good deeds and feels safe in that his deeds will be accepted." Upon hearing these words, Abdul-Malik began to cry until his garment became soaked in tears. He then said, 'You have done waell, O Mansur. Now, recite a part of the Quran to me, for the Quran is a cure for what is in the breasts of men."

Mansur then recited this verse:

بِالْعِبَادِ رَغُوفٌ وَاللَّهُ نَفْسُهُ اللَّهُ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمْ بَعِيدًا أَمَدًا وَبَيْنَهُ بَيْنُهَا أَنْ لَوْ تَوَدُّ سُوءٍ مِنْ عَمِلَتْ وَمَا الْمُحْضَرِّ خَيْرٍ مِنْ عَمِلَتْ مَا نَفْسٍ كُلُّ تَجِدُ َوَم

On the Day when every person will be confronted with all the good he has done, and all the evil he has done, he will wish that there was a great distance between him and his evil. And Allah warns you against Himself and Allah is full of Kindness to His slaves.

[Aal-Imraan : 30]

"You have killed me, O Mansur," said Abdul-Malik. "O Mansur, what does, 'And Allah warns you against Himself' mean?"

"It means His Punishment," said Mansur.

"And what is the meaning of, 'every person will be confronted with all the good he has done,'" asked Abdul-Malik?

"It means that every person will be confronted on the Day of Resurrection by all of his deeds, the largest of them and the tiniest of them. Allah will not leave out or forget any of that."

Abdul Malik then continued to cry until, being overcome with fear, he fainted.

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO DISOBEY ALLAH...

It is reported that a man once went to Ibrahim bin Adham and said, "Oh Abu Ishaaq, I continually wrong my own self, and I turn away from everything that invites me to improve my way of life."

Ibrahim said, "If you can fulfill five conditions, then sinning will never harm you, and you can fulfill your desires as much as you want."

"Tell me those conditions," exclaimed the man.

"As for the first, if you want to disobey Allah, then do not eat from His sustenance," said Ibrahim.

"What then will I eat, for everything on the earth is from His sustenance?" said the man.

"Listen," said Ibrahim. "Are you being sensible when you eat from His sustenance while you are disobedient to Him?"

"No," said the man. "What is the second condition?"

"If you want to disobey Allah, then do not live in any of His lands," said Ibrahim.

"This is even worse than the first. All that is in the East and West belong to Him. So where then will I live?"

"Listen," said Ibrahim. "If you insist on disobeying Him while you eat from His sustenance and live in His lands, then at least look for some spot where He cannot see you, and disobey Him there."

"O Ibrahim!" exclaimed the man. "How can I do that, when He even knows the deepest secrets that are

in the breasts of men? What is the fourth condition?" he asked despondently.

"When the angel of death comes to take your soul, then say to him, 'Give me some respite, so that I can repent sincerely and perform good deeds.'"

"When the time comes, the angel will not accept that plea from me," said the man.

"Listen," said Ibrahim. "If you cannot put off death in order to repent, then how do you expect to be saved?"

"Tell me the fifth condition," said the man.

"When the guardians of Hell-fire come to take you away on the Day of Resurrection, don't go with them."

"They won't let me go!" exclaimed the man.

"Then how do you expect to be saved?" asked Ibrahim.

"Stop, stop! That is enough for me," said the man. "I ask Allah to forgive me and I indeed repent to Him."

The man then dedicated his life to the worship of Allah from that day.

THE LINGERING PAIN OF SINNING

During the caliphate of Umar bin al-Khattab, Sa'eed bin 'Amir was the governor of Hims, a city in ash-Shaam. When Umar visited Hims to see how things were going there, he was met by a large group of people who began to complain to him about Sa'eed.

They found fault with him in four matters. First, they said, he would not come out to them until mid-morning. Second, he would refuse to answer any caller during the night. Third, once a month, he would stay away from the people. And fourth, once in a while, Sa'eed would faint and lose consciousness for no apparent reason.

The Leader of the Believers asked Sa'eed to respond to their complaints.

In regard to the first complaint, Sa'eed explained that he had no servant and that, every morning, he had to crush his own wheat in order to make bread. As soon as he would finish making his bread, he said, he would then go out to serve the people.

As for not answering any callers during the night, he said that he dedicated his days to serving the people and his nights to worshipping Allah.

As for not going out to the people once a month, he explained that he had only one garment and that he washed it once a month and had to then wait until it dried.

As for passing out every so often, Sa'id gave this explanation:

"When I was a polythiest, I witnessed the brutal execution of Habib al-Ansaari in Makkah. I saw how Quraish cut up his flesh little by little. They said to Habib, 'Do you now want Muhammad to take your place?' He said, 'By Allah, I would not want to be safe with myself, my family and my children if

Muhammad were even to be pricked by a thorn.' Every time I remember that day and how I refrained from helping Habib- for I was a polythiest and did not believe in Allah, the All-Mighty- I begin to think that Allah, the Possessor of Might and Majesty, will never forgive me. It is then that I faint, O Leader of the Believers."

THE INTEGRITY OF AL-FUDAYL BIN 'IYAAD

Ar-Rashid, a first century ruler, once said to al-Fudayl bin Iyaad, "Admonish me."

"O Leader of the believers!" said al-Fudayl. "Indeed your grandfather, al-Abbaas, the uncle of the Prophet, once went to the Prophet and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, appoint me to be a leader.' The Messenger of Allah said, 'My uncle, indeed, being a leader leads to sorrow, and regret on the Day of Resurrection. If you are able to go without ever being a leader, then do so!'"

Moved to tears, ar-Rashid said, "Give me more."

al-Fudayl looked at ar-Rashid and said, "O one who has a handsome face, if you are able to protect that face from the Hell-fire then do so. And beware of ever cheating or betraying your people."

Being much moved by al-Fudayl's words, ar-Rashid wanted to reward him.

"Do you have any debts?" he asked.

"To my Lord, yes, and He will hold me accountable for them," said al-Fudayl.

"I am of course referring to debts to other human beings," said ar-Rashid.

After al-Fudayl answered in the negative, ar-Rashid said to one of his assistants, "Give him 1000 dinars, which he can use to help his family."

Al-Fudayl was greatly offended by these words and said, "How perfect Allah is! I am guiding you to safety and you want to reward me with this paltry, worldly sum!"

He then left, having refused to take anything.

DEATH IS BETTER THAN ALLAH'S PUNISHMENT

A very rich businessman was once relaxing in his home when he heard someone knock on his door. When he opened the door, there standing before him was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen in his entire life. He yearned for her and invited her to come inside. But it was not to fulfill his desires that she came; rather, she came because she was extremely poor and was forced to go around begging for money. He ignored her plea for help and instead insisted that she come inside. She answered him in a clear and dignified tone, "Death is better than disobeying my Lord."

She left but then returned after a number of days. Her situation had become more desperate and again she asked him to help her. The businessman answered her as he did the first time.

With tears flowing down her cheeks, the girl entered his house. Again she pleaded, "Please! Feed me for the Countenance of Allah!"

"Not unless you allow me to satisfy my desires with you," said the man, both coldly and hungrily.

"Death is better than the punishment of Allah," proclaimed the girl.

As she was leaving, her sincere words echoed in the mind of the businessman, and after a long life of sinning, sincere tears of remorse flowed from his eyes for the very first time. He repented to Allah and then fed the girl. He later married her and they enjoyed a happy marriage together.

[So, in the end, he got what he wanted, except that he got it in a lawful manner. And that is what made all the difference].

THE REALITY OF OUR EXISTENCE

Al-Asma'i reported that the ruler ar-Rashid once ordered for many delicacies to be prepared for him. He wanted to have a party for himself, so he had a hall decorated for him and invited the famous poet Abul-'Ataahiyah.

When the party began, ar-Rashid looked at Abul-'Ataahiyah and said, "Describe the pleasures of the world that we are enjoying."

Abul-'Ataahiyah began:

Live in comfort as long as you please ** Under the shades of high and wonderful castles

"Wonderful, wonderful. Please continue," said ar-Rashid.

Abul-'Ataahiyah continued,

All that you desire is brought to you ** Quickly, both in the morning and in the evening

"Wonderful, wonderful," chimed in ar-Rashid. "Please continue."

He resumed thus:

Then when the souls are parting ** Through the breast with a croaking sound

It is then that one comes to know ** I have lived nothing but a life of deception

Ar-Rashid began to weep profusely, and some of those present looked reproachfully at Abul-'Ataahiyah and said, "The Leader of the believers has invited you to make him happy, yet all that you have succeeded in doing is making him sad!"

"Leave him alone," said ar-Rashid. "He simply noticed that we were in a state of blindness, and disliked adding to it with even more blindness."

THERE IS HOPE UNTIL THE VERY END

One day, as Ali bin Abi Taalib and al-Hussain bin Ali were walking together, they heard a man supplicating to Allah. The man was begging Allah to forgive him for his evil crimes. His sincere tone and eloquent words aroused the interest of Ali, who turned to his son and said, "Do you not hear the man who is so very contrite because of his sins? Go catch up with him and call him."

When al-Hussain caught up with the man, he saw that he was clean-looking, clean-smelling, with nice clothes and altogether handsome- except that he seemed to be paralyzed on the right side of his body. Al-Hussaid said, "Answer the summons of the Leader of the believers, Ali bin Abu Taalib."

Dragging his right side, the man followed al-Hussain back to where Ali was waiting for them.

"Who are you and what is your story," asked Ali.

"My story is that of a man who did not fulfill the rights of others and is now being punished for that," said the man.

"And what is your name?" asked Ali.

"Munaazil bin Laahiq," said the man.

"And what is your story?" asked Ali.

"I was famous among the Arabs for my frivolous and sinful exploits. Merciful and kind, my father would constantly admonish me and advise me to mend my ways. He would remind me of Allah's punishment, saying, 'My son, do not go against He who punishes with the Hell-fire!' When he would persist in advising me, I felt his voice grating on my nerves. I would get so frustrated that I would beat him with harsh blows. In response to my blows, he one day said, 'By Allah, I will fast without breaking my fast and I will pray without stopping to sleep.' He fasted for an entire week, but seeing no change in my behavior, he climbed a camel and set off to perform Hajj. His parting words were, 'I am going to the House of Allah, and there I will seek help from Allah against you.' When he reached Makkah, he embraced the curtain of the Kaa'ba and supplicated against me, asking Allah to make me paralyzed on one side of my body. By the One Who raised the sky and sends down the rain, no sooner did my father finish his supplication than I became paralyzed on my right side, which became like a piece of wood. Anyone that would then pass by me would point to me and say, 'Allah answered his father's supplication against him.'"

"What did your father do then?" asked Ali.

"O Leader of the Believers, after he became pleased with me, I asked him to go back and invoke Allah on my behalf. He agreed to do so. I walked alongside him as he rode on his camel, until we reached a place called the Valley of Arak. When we reached there, a group of birds flew away from a tree, their sudden movement frightened the camel. As the camel raced off in a state of fright, my father fell off it and died."

It was certainly late for the man, but not too late, and so Ali advised him to continue to supplicate and to repent for his past misdeeds. Ali then parted from the man, but before leaving him, he taught him the supplication that a person in distress should say. [The narration does not specifically mention which supplication it was that Ali taught the man.]

One year, when al-Asma'i was on his way to perform hajj, a bedouin carrying a large sword and a long spear confronted him. It was quite obvious that he was a highway robber. He came near al-Asma'i and instead of fleeing or attempting to escape, al-Asma'i drew nearer to him. He extended greetings of peace to the robber. The latter responded and then asked, "Where are you from?"

"I am a poor man on a journey," was al-Asma'i's reply.

"Do you have anything with you?" asked the robber.

"Yes, I have with me the Quran," answered al-Asma'i.

"And what is the Quran?" asked the robber.

"It is the speech of Allah 'Azza wa Jall," said al-Asma'i.

"And does Allah have speech?"

"Yes," replied al-Asma'i.

"Then let me hear some of His speech," said the robber.

Al-Asma'i recited the following verse:

يُوفِ السَّمَاءُ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوعَدُونَ

And in the heaven is your provision, and that which you are promised

[adh-Dhaariyaat : 22]

When the robber heard these words, he began to cry, and threw down his sword and spear, and said, "Perish the highway robber, who seeks sustenance on the Earth, when it is really in the heavens!"

Al-Asma'i was very much pleased to see the quick transformation of the robber. On the following year, when al-Asma'i went to perform Hajj again, he saw the former robber- whose face now had the signs of faith written on it- clinging to the curtain of the Kaa'ba. It was late in the night and he was saying, "O my Lord, the eyes are sleeping and every loved one is with his beloved. The gates of all kings are now closed, but Your gate is open to those who ask of You. Would that I knew whether You accepted this night of worship from me..."

A TONGUE THAT REMAINS MOIST WITH THE REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAH

When passing through a mountain pass, a bedouin once came across an old man who was blind and who seemed to be afflicted with various ailments all over his body. It was clear that he was wasting away. He was even paralyzed and was constantly forced to remain in a seated position. The Bedouin could clearly hear him say, "All praise is for Allah, Who has kept me safe from ailments with which He has tised many among His creation; and He has indeed preferred me over many among those that He created."

"My brother!" exclaimed the bedouin. "What have you been saved from? By Allah, I think that you have been afflicted with every single kind of ailment!"

"Go away from me," said the old man, as he raised his head. "Do I not still have a tongue with which I can pronounce His Oneness, and with which I can remember Him every single moment? And do I not still have a heart with which I can know Him?"

These words of the old man were enough for the bedouin to repent to Allah for his sins and ask Him for forgiveness.

RACE TOWARDS REPENTANCE!

Wanting to advise his son al-Hasan, Ali ibn Abi Taalib said, "My son: Beware of three, be in harmony with three, be modest before three, race to three, flee from three, be in disagreement with three, fear three, and hope of three."

"O my father, please explain," said al-Hasan

"Beware of pride, anger, and the base kind of ambition. Live in harmony with Allah's Book, His Messenger's sunnah, and the lives of His righteous slaves. Hurry away from sinning, race to repentance and sprint forward in the pursuit of knowledge. My son, flee from lying, treachery and transgression. Be in disagreement with evil and its people, hypocrisy and its people, and foolishness and its people. Fear Allah, fear the company of those who do not fear Allah, and fear the evil speech of your tongue. Hope for Allah to forgive your sins, to accept your deeds, and to accept the intercession of your Prophet."

REPENT THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Talq bin Habib said, "Indeed, the rights of Allah are too great for His slaves to be able to fulfill them. And indeed, His favors and blessings are too many for them to be able to enumerate them. Then [the only way to safety] is for you to wake up every morning and repent for your sins, and go to bed every night and repent for your sins."

PREVENTION IS THE BEST REMEDY

Al-Hasan once said, "O son of Adam, to abstain from a sin is easier for you than curing it later on through repentance. How can you be sure that you will not commit a deed so grave in its wickedness that the door of repentance will be closed before you?"

HE BROUGHT ME TO THEM SO THAT I CAN REFORM MY CHARACTER..

Al-Fudayl bin Iyaad was famous for his piety and worship, but he was not always a practicing Muslim. In his early years, al-Fudayl was an infamous highway robber; he would prowl in the night for victims on

the road from Abiward to Sarakhs. Between these two cities was a small village in which lived a girl that al-Fudayl was in love with. One night, out of desperation to be with her, al-Fudayl climbed the wall of her home. As he was climbing over it, he heard a voice recite:

اللَّهُ لِيَذْكُرَ قُلُوبُهُمْ تَخْشَعُ أَنْ آمَنُوا لِلَّذِينَ يَأْنِ أَلَمْ

Has not the time come for the hearts of those who believe to be affected by Allah's Reminder?

[al-Hadeed : 16]

At that moment, al-Fudayl answered, "O my Lord, the time has indeed come." He returned from where he came and sought refuge near a traveling party on the main road. They were busy engaging in a serious discussion. al-Fudayl heard one of them say, "Let us continue our journey now." Another answered, "No, not until the morning, for al-Fudayl is lurking on the road somewhere out there, just waiting to rob us."

Having heard the entire conversation, al-Fudayl thought to himself, "I go around in the night to sin, while a group of Muslims remain here because they fear me. Indeed i feel that Allah has brought me here to them only so that I can reform my character. O Allah, I indeed repent to you.."

OLD AGE

There was a young man among the children of Israel who worshipped Allah for twenty years. He then disobeyed Allah for twenty years. Then, one day, looking in the mirror, he noticed the whiteness of his beard and was taken aback by what he saw. He said, "O my Lord, I had obeyed you for twenty years and I then disobeyed you for twenty years. Now if I return to You, will You accept me?"

He then heard a caller say, "You loved Us and We loved You. You left Us, and so We left you. You disobeyed Us, and so We gave you respite. And if you return to Us, We will accept you."

THE EVER-LIVING NEVER SLEEPS

Both of them lived in a small town that was populated by only tens or hundreds of people. He was in love with her, and so when he saw her walking alone one night, he followed her until he had her cornered. When he came near to her, he said, "Woman, I crave for you."

She said, "First go and see if all the people are asleep."

Very pleased at her response, he walked around the town and returned. "Everyone is asleep," he said.

"What about Allah Azza wa Jal?" she asked. "Is He sleeping at this hour?"

"Woman, what are you saying?" he exclaimed. "Indeed, Allah does not sleep: neither slumber nor sleep overtake Him."

"The One Who hasn't slept and doesn't sleep sees us, even if people don't see us," she said. "Do you not fear He Who neither sleeps nor is heedless of anything that happens?"

The man left her alone with tears flowing from his eyes, having nothing in mind except the desire to repent to the One Who neither sleeps nor is heedless of anything that happens.

THE HALLMARKS OF A SINCERE REPENTANCE

Shaqiq said, "Weeping over past misdeeds, being afraid of perpetrating a sin again, forsaking the company of evildoers, and adhering to the company of the righteous- these are the hallmarks of a sincere repentance."

MY LORD, HERE IS MY FORELOCK IN YOUR HAND

As two servants of the ruler, an-Naasir, were talking to one another, one of them said, "I wonder what the ruler is doing today?" The other said, "I never saw him more afraid and sincere than he is today. He is by himself, wearing course clothing and sitting down on dirt. He is crying out loud and acknowledging his sins. I heard him say, 'My Lord, here is my forelock in Your Hand, if You are to punish the people, and You are All-Wise and All-Just, then how will I, with all of my sins, escape your punishment?'"

At that moment, Mundhir bin Sa'eed was passing by, and he heard what the ruler's servant said. Mundhir looked at him and said, "O young servant, wear a raincoat back with you, for if the mighty one on earth becomes fearful of Allah's punishment, then the All-Mighty One in the heavens will have mercy on His slaves [and bless them with rain and sustenance]."

The Advice of al-Khidr

Shaikh al-Ghazaali reported that Musa asked al-Khidr to advise him. He said, "Be someone who constantly smiles, and not someone who is constantly angry. Be someone who benefits others, and not someone who harms others. Refrain from argumentation. Do not walk around without purpose. Do not laugh without a reason. Do not disparage wrongdoers by mentioning their mistakes to them. And cry over your misdeeds, O son of 'Imraan."

The Advice of al-Hasan

al-Hasan once wrote the following short letter to Umar bin Abdul Azeez:

"Fear what Allah told you to fear. Take what is in your hands, and use it for what is to come. At the moment of death, sure news will come to you and peace."

Umar wrote back, asking al-Hasan to advise him some more. Al-Hasan wrote back:

"Indeed the terror of the Day of Resurrection is greater than you might think. Indeed, frightful matters are near at hand. You will have to face all of that, either by facing it all and being saved, or by facing it all and being destroyed. Know that he who takes account of his own deeds will succeed, and that he who is negligent in this regard will fail. Whoever looks at the outcomes of his actions will be saved, while he who obeys his desires will be misguided. Whoever is patient and forbearing will gain profits. Whoever remains awake and vigilant regarding his deeds will be safe, whoever is safe reflects, whoever reflects sees, whoever sees understands, and whoever understands knows. Then if you slip, return and repent. And when you are remorseful, then refrain [from sins]. When you are ignorant, ask. And when you are angry, restrain your anger."

REPENTANCE

IS

SWEET

A tyrant ruler once left his castle to walk around the streets of his realm in order to enjoy himself. As he was walking, he came across a number of gardens and decided to enter one of them. After spending a short while looking at the garden's beautiful trees, he became thirsty, and so he asked the owner of the garden, who was sitting nearby, for a drink. The owner told him that though there was no water nearby, the ruler was free to take a pomegranate and quench his thirst with that. The ruler agreed, and when he took his first bite from the pomegranate that was given to him, he was amazed to see how wonderfully and almost unnaturally sweet it was. He said to himself, "This pomegranate is indeed wonderful."

He decided to evict the owner and take possession of the garden. But first, he wanted to make sure that all of the pomegranates of the garden were equally wonderful and sweet, and so he asked for another one. When he began to eat a second pomegranate, he was shocked to see that it was very bitter and foul tasting.

He asked the owner if it was from the same tree as the first pomegranate. "Yes," said the owner.

"Then how come it is not as sweet as the first?"

"O leader, perhaps you intended to do some evil, which caused its taste to change," said the righteous garden owner.

"By Allah, the man has spoken the truth," thought the ruler. He repented from his intention to usurp the garden, and decided he wanted to enjoy another pomegranate, and so he asked for one. When he tasted it, it was even sweeter than the first one he had eaten. What is more, it was from the very same tree.

فَإِنِّي تَوَلَّوْا وَإِنْ فَضْلُهُ فَضْلِي ذِي كُلِّ وَيُوتِ مُسَمًّى أَجَلٍ إِلَى حَسَنًا مَّنَاعًا يُمَتِّعُكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُوبُوا ثُمَّ رَبَّكُمْ اسْتَغْفِرُوا وَأَنْ
كَبِيرٍ يَوْمِ عَذَابٍ عَلَيْكُمْ أَخَافُ

And seek the forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him in repentance, that He may grant you good enjoyment, for a term appointed, and bestow His abounding Grace to every owner of grace

[Hud

:

3]

IT IS INDEED YOU WHO IS THE RIDER, AND I WHO AM THE FOOT TRAVELER

One year, Ibrahim bin Adham decided to perform hajj on foot, walking from his homeland to Makkah. As he was leaving his homeland, a man riding on a camel passed by and said, "O Ibn Adham, where are you going?"

"I am going to perform hajj, if Allah wills," said Ibrahim.

"Then where is your mount, Ibn Adham, for the journey is long," asked the man.

"I have many mounts that I ride upon though you cannot see them," said Ibrahim.

"If I am afflicted with a calamity, I ride on the mount of patience. If I am given a blessing, I ride on the mount of thankfulness. If something that is decreed happens to me, I ride on the mount of contentment. And when my soul invites me to satisfy some lust or desire, I reflect on how the time I have left on earth is less than the time that has already gone by."

"You are indeed traveling by the command of Allah," said the man. "Then, by Allah, it is you who is the rider, and I who am the foot traveler."

THEN HOW WILL YOU WITHSTAND THE FIRE OF THE HEREAFTER?

Abdullah bin Marzuq, who was a close friend of the ruler al-Mahdi, was drunk one day and consequently missed the congregational prayer. His female servant came to him with a piece of burning wood and placed it on his leg. He jumped up with an expression of pain on his face.

"If you cannot withstand the fire of the earth, then how will you withstand the Fire of the Hereafter [which is 70x more intense than the fire of this world]?"

Having understood the point of the painful lesson, Abdullah bin Marzuq repented. Thereafter, he performed his prayers on time and gave away a great deal in charity. After some time passed, al-Fudayl ibn Iyaad and Ibn Uyaynah visited him, and just by looking at him and the furniture of his home, they noticed a drastic change in his lifestyle. They asked, "No one forsakes something for Allah except that Allah compensates him with something equal or better, so what did Allah compensate you with for what you abandoned?"

"Contentment for the situation I find myself to be in," he said.

A VISIT TO THE GRAVEYARD

Once, when Maimun bin Mihraan and Umar bin Abdul Azeez were visiting the graveyard, Umar began to cry. Turning to Maimun he said, "O Abu Ayyub, these are the graves of my fathers from Banu Umayyah. When I see their graves now, it seems as if they never participated with the dwellers of the world in their pleasures and lives. Do you not see how they are beset by trials? The insects are feeding off of their bodies..."

Umar then began to weep until he fainted. When he regained consciousness, he said, "Let us go, for by Allah, I do not know of anyone who is more blessed than he who comes to these graves, yet is saved from the punishment of Allah."

THE RANKING OF A PERSON WHO REPENTS

Bakr ibn Abdullah al-Muzani is the narrator of this story:

There was once a butcher who fell in love with the daughter of his neighbors. One day, the girl's parents sent her on an errand to the neighboring town. Seeing that she was alone, the butcher followed her until she reached a secluded place, where he made his presence known to her. When he tried to seduce her, the girl said, "Do not do so! Indeed, I love you even more than you love me, but I fear Allah."

The butcher's jaws dropped and he said in self-reproach, "You fear Allah and I don't!" He left her alone and repented for his intentions.

On his way back, he became extremely thirsty. He soon came across a Prophet from the Prophets of the Children of Israel. Noticing the expression on the butcher's face, the Prophet asked, "What is the matter with you?"

"Extreme thirst," said the butcher.

"Let us go supplicate to Allah for rain."

"I have no good deed that makes my supplication worthy of being answered," said the butcher.

"Then let me invoke Allah while you say 'Ameen' to my invocations," said the Prophet.

He then began to supplicate, and the butcher said, 'Ameen,' after each of the supplications.

Suddenly, a cloud appeared, rain fell from it into the nearby town, after which it approached the two men. Wherever the butcher walked, the cloud followed after him, instead of hovering over the Prophet.

"You claim that you have no good deeds," said the Prophet. "Yet despite the fact that it was I who supplicated while you said 'ameen' the cloud shaded the city and then it followed you. What is your story?"

The butcher told him what happened with his neighbor's daughter.

"One who repents to Allah has a ranking that no other person can achieve," said the Prophet.

WHICH OF THESE IS MORE BELOVED TO ME?

Ibrahim bin al-Haarith is the narrator of this story:

There once was a man who was known for weeping from fear of Allah. One day, he was asked about his bouts of weeping. He said, "I cry when I remember the many ways in which I have wronged my own self, and when I remember how I have not been modest before He Who has the ability to punish me. He

has given me respite until the day of eternal punishment, the day of eternal misery. By Allah, were I to be asked, 'Which is more desirable to you- for accountability to be taken of you and for you to then be ordered to be taken to Paradise, or for you to be dust,' I would choose to be dust."

May Allaah forgive our dry eyes and hardened hearts and enrich us with taqwa.. subhanAllah.

A COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION

Ja'far bin Harb was an important government figure and enjoyed as much wealth and status as the governors of the various provinces. The ruler specifically trusted him with his most important tasks, and so Ja'far was preoccupied with worldly pursuits.

One day he heard a man recite the verse

الْحَقُّ مِنْ نَزَلٍ وَمَا اللَّهُ لِيُذَكِّرَ قُلُوبُهُمْ تَخْشَعُ أَنْ آمَنُوا لِلَّذِينَ نَبَأَ أَلَمْ

Has not the time come for the hearts of those who believe to be affected by Allah's Reminder and that which has been revealed of the Truth

[al-Hadeed : 16]

Ja'far called out, "O Allah, yes.. O Allah, yes.. O Allah, yes.." He then cried many tears of sorrow for his meaningless life.

He proceeded to distribute all of his wealth as atonement for his sins, even his clothing. To cover his private areas, he walked into the shallow part of a river. Hearing about Ja'far's complete transformation, a man went to the river and gave him clothing as a gift. Owing nothing save the clothes he received as a gift, Ja'far dedicated the rest of his life to knowledge and worship.

[Author's note]: The point of this and similar stories is not to encourage people to go to extremes in their lives. Rather, it is to show how people from the earlier centuries of Islam underwent complete character transformations once they became guided to repenting from their sins. So have we repented sincerely for our sins? If yes, then how much have we changed for the better? And how much more can we do to change for the better? And if no, then has not the time come for the hearts of those who believe to be affected by Allah's Reminder and that which has been revealed of the Truth?

GIVING CHARITY TO ATONE FOR PAST SINS

One day, a man named Habib bin Muhammad, a man preoccupied with the worldly pursuits, decided to attend a gathering of al-Hasan al-Basree. While there, Habib became greatly moved by al-Hasan's sermon. When he left it, he decided to repent for his sins and lead a new life of worship and obedience to Allah.

The first thing he decided was to purify his soul by giving charity. He started off by giving away 10,000 dirhams in the early part of the day. Soon thereafter, he gave away another 10,000 dirhams and said, "O my Lord, this 10,000 is my gratitude for the guidance You have blessed me with." He then gave away another 10,000 dirhams, and this time he said, "O my Lord, if You did not accept from me the first

amount or the second amount, then accept this from me." He then gave away another 10,000, after which he said, "O My Lord! If you have accepted from me the third amount, then this is a show of my gratitude for You having accepted my deed."

****NEW****

HOW TO REACH ONE'S DESTINATION

Silah bin Ashyam used to spend his days worshipping near a graveyard. Whenever he would walk to his place of worship, he would pass by a group of young men who would waste the hours of the day in frivolous entertainment. Silah used to stop and say to them, "Tell me. If a group of people intend to go on a journey, and if they spend their days playing on the road and their nights sleeping in their tents, when will they reach their destination?"

One day, he passed by them and asked the same question. One young man present understood Silah's words. Turning to his companions, he said, "O people! By Allah, he is referring to us, for we pray during the day and sleep during the night. So how will we reach Paradise?"

He then followed Silah, and became his companion in worship until he died.

IF YOU HAVE NO SHAME, THEN DO AS YOU PLEASE

One of the children of al-Qa'nabi narrated this story.

"A regular drinker of wine, my father used to keep company with disreputable young men. He one day invited them and then sat down in front of his door, waiting for them to arrive. While he was waiting, Shu'bah passed by on his donkey and a number of people were racing behind him in order to keep up with him.

"Who is that?" asked al-Qa'nabi.

"Shu'bah," answered someone seated nearby.

"And what is Shu'bah?"

"A scholar of hadith."

"Recite a hadith to me," said al-Qa'nabi, who was wearing an indecent red-colored izar.

"You are not one of the people of hadith so I do not feel obliged to narrate to you," said Shu'bah.

Al-Qa'nabi took out a knife and pointed it at Shu'bah. "You will report to me a narration or I will injure you," said al-Qa'nabi.

"Mansur reported to us," began Shu'bah, "From Rib'i from Abu Mas'ud who said, 'The Messenger of Allah said, **If you have no shame, then do as you please.**'" [Bukhari 6120]

Al-Qa'nabi tossed the knife to the ground and returned to the inside of his home. He took all the wine bottles he had and emptied them on the floor. He said to his mother, "My companions will soon arrive. When they come, admit them inside and offer them food. When they are finished eating, tell them what I did with the alcohol so they will then leave."

Al-Qa'nabi immediately left for al-Madinah, where he spent the following years of his life as a student of imaam Maalik bin Anas, and had the honor of reporting hadith from the imaam.

HOW TO WARD OFF THE EVILS OF WEALTH

Sa'eed bin Ayman, the freed slave of Ka'b bin Sur, said, "While the Messenger of Allah was speaking to his companions, a poor man came and sat down beside a rich man. From his movement, it seemed as if the rich man were moving his garment away so that the poor man wouldn't touch it. The Messenger of Allah's [color] changed [from anger], and he said:

"O so-and-so! Were you afraid that your richness would transfer to him, or that his poverty would transfer to you?"

"And is richness evil?" asked the rich man.

The Prophet said, "Yes, for your richness invites you to the Hell-fire, while his poverty invites him to Paradise."

The rich man asked, "Then how can I save myself from that?"

The Prophet answered, "Comfort him with some of it."

The rich man said, "I will do so then."

The poor man then spoke, "I am in no need of it."

The Prophet said, "Then ask Allah to forgive your brother, and supplicate for him."

BE PLEASED WITH ME

Maalik ar-Ruaasi reported that he, along with others from Banu Kilaab, attacked a group of people from the Banu Asad tribe. They killed some and dealt indecently with female prisoners. News of what happened reached the Prophet, who then cursed the attackers and supplicated against them.

When Maalik heard this he tied his own hands, went to the Prophet and said, "O Messenger of Allah, be pleased with us, may Allah be pleased with you."

The Prophet turned away from him, but he went around the Prophet to face him. He then repeated his previous plea, "Be pleased with us, may Allah be pleased with you." He then said, "For by Allah, when one tries to please the Lord, He becomes pleased with Him."

The Prophet drew near to Maalik and asked him, "Have you repented for what you did, and asked Allah to forgive you?"

"Yes," answered Maalik.

"O Allah, pardon him and be pleased with him," said the Prophet.

[*Usood al-Ghaabah*, 4595]