

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

Every Friday, Muslims gather in the mosque to listen to a khutbah and to pray together. This is an occasion that is repeated weekly wherever there is a mosque. The imam does his best to impart to the assembly the teachings of Islam. However, we, the elders, know it from experience that these twenty to thirty-minute sermons are insufficient to help the people in their understanding for a better practice of the duties that we owe to Allah and to our fellow human beings. There is a need for each one among us to make a personal effort to increase our knowledge of Islam with a view to a better practice. These days people have a more leisurely life unlike that of their parents or grandparents and they have plenty of time at their disposal. Every one should do their best to check how far they are using this time to better themselves either in knowledge or practice of their duties. The imam's duty is just to impart the knowledge whilst that of those who hear the words is to practice by further exploring the subject matter touched upon in the khutbah. We should all bear this in mind when we come for Jummah and we should do our best to be here on time.

Today, I will insha Allah read to you some extracts of the Promised Messiah's writings about repentance because I think it will help us all in improving our own behaviour and stay the course in our way to Allah. Very often we get discouraged but we should not be because whatever the extent of our sins, the door of repentance is always open for us if we understand where we have sinned. We should all learn by heart and remember the following verse of the Holy Quran because we should never despair of Allah's Mercy. The verse is:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Say, "O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls! despair not of the mercy of Allah, surely Allah forgives all sins. Verily He is Most Forgiving, Merciful."
(39:53)

Now we will start reading the extracts from the Promised Messiah's writings. He said:

"It is obvious that man is very weak by nature and has been charged with hundreds of Divine commandments. On account of his weakness, he falls short in carrying out some Divine commandments and sometimes he is overcome by the desires of the self that incite to evil. On account of his weak nature, he deserves that at the time of any slipping, if he

should repent and seek forgiveness, God's mercy should save him from being ruined. It is a certainty that if God had not been the Acceptor of repentance, man would not have been charged with these hundreds of commandments. This proves conclusively that God turns towards man with mercy and is Most Forgiving.

Taubah (Repentance) means that a person should discard a vice with the resolve that thereafter, even if he is thrown into the fire, he would not commit that vice. When man turns towards God Almighty with such sincerity and firm resolve, then God, who is Benevolent and Merciful, forgives him that particular sin. It is one of the high Divine attributes that God accepts repentance and saves a sinner from ruin. If man had not the hope of his repentance being accepted, he would not be able to refrain from sinning.

The Christians also believe in repentance, but on condition that the person who repents should be a Christian. Islam lays down no condition for repentance. The repentance of the followers of every faith can be accepted leaving out only the sin of denying the Book of God and His Messenger. It is impossible that a person should attain salvation only through his conduct. It is the Benevolence of God that He accepts the repentance of some and bestows by His grace such powers on others that they are safeguarded against sinning. **[Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 23, pp. 189-190]**

He said further:

“To reject repentance and forgiveness is to shut the door of human progress. It is obvious to everyone that man is not perfect in himself, but in fact he stands in need of perfection. As after his birth he gradually widens his knowledge and is not born learned and well informed. In the same way, when after his birth he begins to be sensible of his surroundings, his moral condition is at a very low ebb. Observation of the condition of small children would show that most children are inclined to beat others on the slightest provocation and many of them are given to telling lies and using foul language with other children. Some steal and carry tales and are envious and miserly. When they grow up, they fall into the grip of the self that incites to vice and are guilty of diverse types of evil and wickedness.

Thus, for most people the first stage of life is impure, but when a fortunate person emerges from the fierce flood of youth, he turns towards God and withdraws from undesirable activities through sincere repentance and occupies himself with purifying the garment of his nature. These are stages of human life which a person has commonly to traverse. This shows that were it true that repentance is not accepted, it would mean that God does not desire to bestow salvation on anyone”. **[Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 23, pp. 192-193]**

Though God Almighty has announced that the seed of the Unity of God is present in every soul, He has also expounded that that seed is not in equal strength in everyone and that the natures of some are overcome to such a degree by their passions that that light almost disappears. It is obvious, therefore, that the innateness of animal or aggressive faculties is not inconsistent with the innateness of belief in One God. However much a person may be given to following his desires, and however much he might yield to his evil-directing self, he possesses to some degree a natural light. For instance, if under the impact of passion or anger a person commits theft, murder, or adultery then though this act of his is a demand of his nature, yet the light of well-doing which is invested in his nature rebukes him at the very time when he indulges in any of these improper activities. Allah the Exalted refers to it in the verse: “*fa alhamaha fojooraha wa taqwaha*” meaning “And He revealed to it what is wrong for it and what is right for it —“(91:9)

This means that God bestows a type of revelation upon every person which is called the light of the heart and which is the faculty of distinguishing between good and evil. For example, when a thief commits theft, or a murderer commits murder, God puts it in his heart at the same time that he has done ill and not good, but he pays no attention to it for the light of his heart and his reason are weak and are overcome by his animal faculties and his ego is insistent.... The turmoil of the ego of such people cannot be reduced, for that which God has imposed cannot be removed by anyone else; yet God has provided a remedy. What is that remedy? It is **repentance, seeking forgiveness and remorse**. This means that if they do evil in conformity with the demands of their ego, or an evil thought arises in their minds and they seek a remedy through repentance and seeking forgiveness, God forgives them. If they stumble repeatedly and are remorseful each time and repent, the remorse and repentance wash out the stain of their sin. This is the true atonement which is the remedy of a natural sin. Allah the Exalted refers to it in the verse:

“Who so does some evil or wrongs his soul in any way, and then asks forgiveness of Allah with remorse, will find Allah Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful.” (4:11)

This verse which is so profound and full of wisdom means that as stumbling and sinning are the characteristics of defective souls, which are manifested by them, there are corresponding to them the eternal attributes of God which are mercy and forgiveness and He is inherently Forgiving and Merciful. His forgiveness is not casual but is His eternal attribute which He loves and which He desires to exercise on deserving people. Whenever a person turns to God in remorse and repentance at the time of stumbling or sinning, he becomes deserving that God should turn to him with mercy and forgiveness. This is not limited to once or twice, but it is the eternal attribute of God Almighty that He turns towards a remorseful and repentant servant whenever the latter turns to Him. Thus, it is not God’s natural law that a **weak person should not stumble** or that the nature of those

who are overcome by their animal faculties should be changed, but **His eternal law is that those who commit sin should be forgiven through repentance and seeking forgiveness.** [Brahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 1, pp. 185-187, footnote 11]

In Arabic idiom, *Taubah* (repentance) means 'returning', and that is why in the Holy Qur'an God's name is also *Tawwab*, that is to say, He Who is Oft-Returning. This means that when a person discarding sin turns to God with a sincere heart, God Almighty turns even more to him. This is altogether in accord with the law of nature. God Almighty has made it part of human nature that when a person turns to another with a sincere heart, the latter's heart is also softened for him. Then how can reason accept that when a servant turns towards God Almighty with a true heart God should not turn to him?

Indeed God, who is Benevolent and Merciful, turns even more towards His servant. That is why in the Holy Qur'an, God's name, as we have just mentioned, is also *Tawwab*, meaning Oft-Returning.

Man's turning to God is through remorse and humility and meekness, and God's turning to man is with mercy and forgiveness. If mercy were not one of the attributes of God Almighty, no one would be delivered. It is a pity that people do not ponder over the attributes of God Almighty and depend entirely upon their own actions. But can it be the attitude of God, Who without any action proceeding from man, has created thousands of bounties for him upon the earth, that, when weak man, being warned of his heedlessness should turn to Him, a turning which is like death and should put off his old garment and should be consumed in the fire of His love, God should not turn to him with mercy? Is this the law of nature?" [Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 23, pp. 133-134]

As good Muslims we should submit to Allah and grant Him an ever-widening space in our life if we want to achieve the objectives of our existence. Recently, I read that a writer said that there are only two days that are important for each human being in his life. The first is the day when he/she is born and the second is the day when he/she realizes why he/she exists. Hazrat Masih Maaood (as) said that the day Allah forgives us all our sins through our repentance is really an Eid day for us. So, let us all turn to our Lord with true repentance as he has taught us when He says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُم سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ضَالِّينَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Translation:

“O ye who believe! turn to Allah in sincere repentance. It may be that your Lord will remove the evil *consequences* of your deeds and make you enter Gardens through which rivers flow, on the day when Allah will not abase the Prophet nor those who have believed with him. Their light will run before them and on their right hands. They will say, ‘Our Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us; surely Thou hast power over all things.’” (66:9)

May Allah grant each one among us the opportunity to offer such a repentance and may Allah perfect our light. Ameen.