

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

We will continue with reading extracts from the writings of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) concerning repentance. He said there are three conditions for the acceptance of repentance:

“It should be borne in mind that there are three conditions for repentance, without fulfilment of which true repentance is not achieved.

The first condition is to get rid of wicked fancies which arouse evil propensities. Ideas have great influence. Every action is preceded by an idea. Thus, the prime condition for repentance is that evil thoughts and fancies should be discarded. For instance, if a person has an illicit relationship with a woman and desires to repent, it is necessary that he should conceive of her as ugly and should call to mind all her low qualities. As I have just said, fancies exercise a powerful influence. I have read that some Sufis carried their fancies to such a length that they saw a person in the form of an ape or pig. Everything takes on the colour of how you imagine it to be. Thus, the first condition of repentance is that all thoughts, which give rise to evil pleasures, should be discarded altogether.

The second condition is remorse. Everyone’s conscience admonishes him over every evil, but an unfortunate person leaves his conscience suspended. So, a sinner should express remorse over his sin and evil action and should reflect that the pleasure to be derived from them is temporary. He should also consider that every time there is a decline in that pleasure and that in the end, in old age when his faculties are weakened, he will perforce have to give up all these pleasures. Then why indulge in that which in the end has to be given up anyhow? Most fortunate is the person who turns in repentance and becomes determined to discard all corrupt thoughts and vile fancies. When he gets rid of this impurity, he should be remorseful.

The third condition is a firm resolve that he will not revert to those vices. If he adheres to this resolve, God will bestow upon him the strength for true repentance and he will be rid altogether of his vices which will be replaced by good morals and praiseworthy actions. This is a moral victory. It is for God Almighty to bestow the power and strength for it for He is the Master of all power and all strength. [**Malfuzat, vol. I, pp. 138-40**]

Explaining the meaning of *istighfaar*, he said:

“The true meaning of *Istighfar* is to supplicate God that no human weakness should be manifested and that God might support nature with His strength and might enclose it in the circle of His help and protection. The root of *Istighfar* is *ghafara*, which means to

cover up. Thus, the meaning of *Istighfar* is that God should cover up the natural weakness of the supplicant with His power. This meaning is then enlarged to include the covering up of a sin that has been committed, but the true meaning is that God should safeguard the supplicant against his natural weakness and should bestow upon him power from His power, and knowledge from His knowledge, and light from His light.

Having created man, God has not become separated from him, but as He is man's Creator and the Creator of all his external and internal faculties, He is also All-Sustaining, that is to say, He safeguards with His support everything that He has created. It is, therefore, necessary for man that as he has been created by God, he should seek to safeguard the features of his creation through the All- Sustaining attribute of the Divine.... Thus this is a natural need of man for which he has been directed to carry out *Istighfar*. This is referred to in the verse: “*Allaho laa ilaha illa howa Al hayyul qayyoom*” translated as “Allah – there is no God but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining (2:256)

.... He is both Creator and All-Sustaining. When man was created, the function of creation was completed, but the function of sustaining is forever and that is why *Istighfar* is needed all the time. Every attribute of God possesses a grace and *Istighfar* is needed for winning the grace of the attribute of ‘All-Sustaining’. The same is indicated in the verse of *Surah Fatihah*: “*Iyyaka na'bodo wa iyyaka nasta'eene*” .

This means that: “we worship Thee alone and implore Thee alone for help.” Thy attributes of Providence and All-Sustaining should help us and should safeguard us against stumbling, lest our weakness may become manifest and we should fall short of worshipping Thee. It is thus obvious that the true meaning of *Istighfar* is not that a default has occurred, but that no default should occur. Human nature finding itself weak naturally seeks strength from God, as a child seeks milk from its mother.

As God has bestowed upon man from the beginning, tongue, eyes, heart, and ears, etc., so He has bestowed upon him from the beginning the desire for *Istighfar* and has made him feel that he is dependent upon God for help. This is indicated in the verse:

وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِدِّكَ وَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

Ask forgiveness for thy frailties, and for believing men and believing women. (47:20)

This means that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was directed to supplicate that his nature should be safeguarded against human weakness and should be so strengthened that that weakness should not become manifest. He was also directed to supplicate by way of intercession on behalf of the men and women who believed in him that they should be safeguarded against the punishment for the defaults that might have been committed by them and that during the rest of their lives they should be safeguarded against sin.

This verse comprises a very high philosophy of protection against sin and intercession. It indicates that a person can achieve a high stage of protection against sin and win intercession if he prays constantly for the suppression of his own weakness and for delivering others from the poison of sin and himself draws strength from God through his supplication and desires that those who are related to him through faith should also partake of that strength. A sinless person needs to supplicate God for strength inasmuch as human nature possesses no excellence of its own but receives excellence at every moment from God, and has no strength of its own but receives strength at every moment from God, and has no perfect light of its own but receives light from God. A perfect nature is bestowed an attraction so that it might draw to itself strength from above, but the treasure of strength is the Being of God. **Angels draw strength for themselves from this treasure and so also perfect man draws the strength of sinlessness and grace from this Fountainhead of strength through the pipe of servitude. Thus, from amongst men, he alone is perfectly innocent who draws Divine strength to himself through *Istighfar* and occupies himself throughout with humble supplication so that light should continue to descend upon him....**

Then what is *Istighfar*? It is an instrument through which strength is obtained. The whole secret of Divine Unity is that the quality of innocence should not be regarded as a permanent possession of man, but God should be taken as the Fountainhead for acquiring it. God Almighty metaphorically resembles the heart which has a store of pure blood and the *Istighfar* of a perfect man is like the veins and arteries which are connected with the heart and draw pure blood from it and convey it to the limbs that need it”. [Review of Religions—Urdu, vol. I, pp. 187-190]

He said further:

“*Istighfar* and *Taubah* (repentance) are two separate matters. From one point of view, *Istighfar* has priority over repentance, inasmuch as *Istighfar* is the help and strength which are obtained from God and repentance means standing on one’s own feet. It is the way of God that when a person seeks help from Him, He bestows strength and with that strength the supplicant stands on his own feet and thus possesses the faculty to do good, which is called ‘turning to God’. This is the natural sequence of it. It is appointed for seekers that they should seek help from God in every condition. Till a seeker obtains strength from God, he can do nothing. The strength for repentance is acquired after *Istighfar*. If there is no *Istighfar*, the faculty of repentance dies. If you will thus follow up *Istighfar* with repentance, the result will be as set out in the verse:

يُمَتِّعُكُمْ تَاعَامًا حَسَنًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى

‘He will provide for you a goodly provision until an appointed term. (11:4)

This is the way of God, that those who follow up *Istighfar* with repentance will achieve their cherished grades. Every sense has its limits within which it achieves its high grades; not everyone can be a Prophet or a Messenger or a Truthful (*Siddiq*) or a Testifier (*Shahid*)”. [Malfuzat, vol. II, pp. 68-69]

He said further:

“Remember, the Muslims have been bestowed two things; one for obtaining strength and the other for the practical demonstration of the strength that has been obtained. *Istighfar* is for obtaining strength. It is also called seeking help. The Sufis have said that as physical strength and power is fostered through exercise, in the same way, *Istighfar* is spiritual exercise. Through it, the soul obtains strength and the heart achieve steadfastness. He who desires strength should do *Istighfar*”. [Malfuzat, vol. II, p. 67]

He said further:

“The gates of the grace and benevolence of God Almighty are never closed. If a person turns to Him with a true heart and in sincerity, then He is Forgiving and Merciful and accepts repentance. It is great impertinence and disrespect to speculate how many sinners will God Almighty forgive. The treasures of His mercy are unlimited. He lacks nothing and His doors are not shut upon. All those who arrive before God shall attain high ranks. This is a sure promise. The one who despairs of God Almighty, and his last moment arrives in a state of heedlessness, is most unfortunate and ill-fated because at that time the door is closed”. [Mafuzaat, vol. III, pp. 296-297]

There are some people who are aware of sin and there are others who are not even aware of it. That is why God Almighty has prescribed *Istighfar* in all circumstances so that man should occupy himself with *Istighfar* with regard to all sins, whether external or internal, and whether he has knowledge of them or not. A person should seek forgiveness for every type of sin whether of the hands, or of feet, or of tongue, or of nose, or of ears, or of eyes. In these days we should supplicate like Adam:

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

**‘Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not
and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the lost.’ (7:24)**

This prayer has already been accepted. Do not live heedlessly. He who is not heedless would not be involved in any calamity that is beyond his strength. No misfortune arrives without Divine command. That is why I have been taught the prayer in a revelation:

رَبِّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَخَالِقُكَ رَبِّ فَاحْفَظْنِي وَأَنْصُرْنِي وَارْحَمْنِي

Meaning: “Lord, everything is subservient to Thee; then Lord protect me and help me and have mercy on me” [**Malfuzat, vol. IV, pp. 275-276**]

Allah helped the Promised Messiah understand that this prayer is the *Ism Azam* (great name of Allah). It can be of use in almost all circumstances. We should all make the best use of it. Memorize it and read it with full understanding and whenever you are in any distress, use it and experience its efficacy.

May Allah help each one amongst us to understand these concepts well and may we all use them to our own benefit. Ameen.