

Repentance is an Obligation

Imām al-Barbahārī (رحمه الله) stated,

“[From the Islamic Creed is that we have] Belief that repentance is an obligation upon the servants (of Allāh). That is, they repent to Allāh (عز و جل) from the major and minor sins.”¹

Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān comments² on this statement,

It is an obligation to believe that repentance is compulsory. Repentance from sins is compulsory. Allah (جل و علا) said:

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

‘And turn to Allah all of you, Oh believers so that you may be successful.’ (24:31)

And He (تعالى) said:

¹ Point 170 in his book, Sharḥ as-Sunnah

² Ithāf al-Qārī bi at-Ta’līqāt ‘ala Sharḥ as-Sunnah pp.243-245



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ
عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ

‘O you who believe! Turn to Allāh with sincere repentance! It may be that your Lord will remit from you your sins’ (66:8)

And He (تعالى) said:

وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

‘And whosoever does not repent then they are from the Dhālimūn (wrongdoers etc)’ (49:11)

Therefore, it is obligatory for the Muslim to repent from his sins and evil deeds and that he does not continue or persist or is negligent with regards to sins, and he says; ‘this is something light’ [dismissing his sins and who he is disobeying, i.e. Allāh (عز و جل)]. Do not be negligent with it, it is disobedience [of Allāh], rather he should hasten with repentance.

He (تعالى) said:



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وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا
لِدُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرِ الدُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ
يَعْلَمُونَ (١٣٥) أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن
تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (١٣٦)

‘And those who, when they have committed Fāhishah (illegal sexual intercourse etc.) or wronged themselves with evil, remember Allāh and ask forgiveness for their sins; - and none can forgive sins but Allāh - And do not persist in what (wrong) they have done, while they know.

**For such, the reward is Forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens with rivers flowing underneath (Paradise), wherein they shall abide forever. How excellent is this reward for the doers (who do righteous deeds according to Allāh’s Orders).’
(3:135-136)**

[In this verse] Allāh commended them and made a promise to those who repent. He (جل و علا) said:



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إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ
 فَأُوَلِّبِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١٧) وَلَيْسَتْ
 التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ
 إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْعَنَ

‘Allāh accepts only the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and foolishness and repent soon afterwards; it is they to whom Allah will forgive and Allāh is Ever All-Knower, All-Wise. And of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil deeds until death faces one of them and he says: "Now I repent;" (4:17-18)

When death arrives, repentance is not accepted and if a person continues to live then his repentance in the presence of death is (furthermore) not accepted. So, upon him is to hasten to repentance and not to delay it. As soon as he commits a sin he repents to Allāh ((عز و جلى)) immediately.

Man is not infallible and errors occur from him, shortcomings occur from him, sins occur from him; however, Allāh ((جلى و علا)) by way of His mercy has opened the door of repentance. He has opened for you the door of repentance. He calls you to it and he has promised that He will forgive you, if you are



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truthful in your repentance. So much so, if a disbeliever repents to Allāh; Allāh accepts his repentance.

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَتَّهُوا يُغْفَرَ لَهُمْ مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ

‘Say to those who have disbelieved if they cease (from disbelief) their past will be forgiven’ (Al-Anfaal Verse 38)

He forgives him the sin of disbelief, *shirk* (associating partners with Allah), killing of people and other than that. If he repents to Allāh He accepts his repentance.

And in the Hadith:

“Repentance nullifies that which came before it”³

Therefore, the Muslim needs to repent, the Messenger (صلى الله عليه و سلم) use to seek forgiveness and repent to Allah more than a hundred times a day.

He (صلى الله عليه و سلم) said:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ، فَإِنِّي أَتُوبُ فِي الْيَوْمِ إِلَيْهِ مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ

³ This *Hadith* is reported in as-Silsilah ad-da’ifah of Shaykh Al-Albāni, however there are several other narrations with similar meaning such as: “The one who repents from sins is like the one who has no sin.” Ibn Majah 4250, declared *Hasan* by Shaykh al-Albāni



