

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

FORGIVENESS

“Hey, son of Khattaab!” shouted ‘Uyaynah bin Hisn at ‘Umar *radiallahu anhu*, “By Allah, you neither give in abundance nor do you rule with justice.” ‘Umar *radiallahu anhu* was angered and would have punished ‘Uyaynah for such insolent behavior if was not for the intercession of Hur bin Qays *radiallahu anhu*. He said, “O Ameer-al-Mu’mineen! Allah Ta’aala told his Nabi *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*: ‘Forgive, command good and do not bother of the ignorant’ and undoubtedly this man is among the ignorant.” Hearing this advice, ‘Umar’s *radiallahu anhu* anger immediately subsided . . .¹

What is this, O Jibreel?

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

“Forgive, command good deeds and do not bother of the ignorant.”²

- Ja’far As-Saadiq *radiallahu anhu*, a great grandson of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, said: “This is the most comprehensive *aayah* in the Qur’aan with regards to good character.”³
- When this *aayah* was revealed to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*, he asked Jibreel *alaihis-salaam*: “What is

¹ Al-Bukhari V. Pg.

² Surah Al-A’raaf Aayah 198

³ Tafseer Al-Baghawi V. Pg.

this?” Jibreel *alaihis-salaam* replied: “Allah commands you to forgive those who oppress you, to give those who do not give you and to maintain ties with those who sever their ties with you.”⁴

- ‘Uqbah bin ‘Aamir *radiallahu anhu* asked Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* to inform him of the most excellent of actions. Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* replied: “Maintain ties with those who sever their ties with you, give those who do not give you and ignore those who ill-treat you.”⁵

Surely Allah is Forgiving, Most Able

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا

*“Allah dislikes evil speech except for the oppressed – and most certainly Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”*⁶

The purport of this *aayah* is that backbiting, swearing and cursing are disliked for all Muslims except the oppressed. For example, a man complained to Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* about his neighbour. This was already backbiting of his neighbour. However, instead of reprimanding him, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* advised him to remove all his possessions from his house and place it on the side of the road. The man complied and subsequently told every passerby who enquired about the reason for standing on the road with all his household goods that: “My neighbour is troubling me.” The neighbour soon got wind of what was happening and thus

⁴ Tafseer Ibn Katheer V. Pg.

⁵ Tafseer Ibn Katheer V. Pg.

⁶ Surah An-Nisaa Aayah 148

hastened to the man and begged him to please “return to your house; I will never trouble you again.”⁷ Telling every passerby that his neighbour was troubling him was also backbiting. However, it was permissible for him because he was oppressed.

Another example taken from the *Sunnah* is the Hadith:

المُسْتَبْتَانِ مَا قَالَا فَعَلَى الْبَادِي مِنْهُمَا، مَا لَمْ يَعْتَدِ الْمَظْلُومُ

“When two people swear each other, the sin of what they say is upon the one who commenced so long as the one who was oppressed does not transgress.”⁸

In short, swearing is impermissible. However, if somebody swears you (unlawfully), it is permissible for you to swear him provided you do not swear him more than he swore you.

Having granted the above concession, Allah thereafter encourages forgiveness.

إِنْ تُبْدُوا خَيْرًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ أَوْ تَعْفُوا عَنْ سُوءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا قَدِيرًا

“If you expose or conceal good or you forgive wrong (that was done to you), then surely Allah is Forgiving, yet All-Able.”

Worthy of consideration is termination of the *aayah* with Allah’s attributes of forgiveness and total ability (to do whatever he desires). The message behind this is that: *If Allah forgives His disobedient servants despite His ability to punish them, should we not also forgive those who infringe on our*

⁷ Sunan Abi Da’ud Hadith 5153

⁸ Sunan Abi Da’ud Hadith 4894

rights? Hasan Basri said, "He forgives the sinners despite His ability to take revenge from them. You should therefore follow the *sunnah* of Allah Ta'aala."⁹

In this regards Haafidh Ibn Katheer quotes a narration which states that the angels who carry the 'arsh of Allah are constantly engaged in His *tasbeeh* (glorification). The *tasbeeh* of some of them is:

سبحانك على حلمك بعد علمك

"We glorify you because of your tolerance despite your knowledge (of our shortcomings)."

The *tasbeeh* of the others is:

سبحانك على عفوك بعد قدرتك

*"We glorify you because of your forgiveness despite your ability (to punish)."*¹⁰

In addition to this, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* informed us that just as *sadaqah* (giving charity) does not decrease one's wealth, forgiving those who ill-treat you does not lower your status – it actually raises it.¹¹

At home, when one of your children bullies one of his siblings, we feel a sympathetic towards the victim. Similarly, if we are the children of Allah and one of us ill-treats another, Allah will definitely show mercy on the victim. Hence, the offender is actually doing his victim a favour and therefore deserves

⁹ Rooh-ul-Ma'aani V. Pg.

¹⁰ Tafseer Ibn Katheer V. Pg.

¹¹

compensation. Thus, when Hasan Basri was informed that a certain person had backbitten him, he sent him a plate of fresh dates and a message that *'I have learnt that you had backbitten me and thus presented your good deeds to me. I therefore present my dates to you'*.¹²

The People of Taqwa

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَحَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ
وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

*"And hasten to forgiveness from your Rabb and a garden the breadth of which is (is like that of) the skies and the earth. It is prepared for the people of taqwa – those who spend in ease and difficulty, swallow their anger and forgive the people (for ill-treating them). And Allah loves the good-doers."*¹³

Ali bin Husain, commonly known as Zain-ul-'Aabideen, was making *wudoo*. The jug from which his slave-girl was pouring water for him slipped from her hand and fell on his head. As he raised his gaze at her, she cited the words وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ (*those who swallow their anger*). His immediate response was: "I have swallowed my anger." That should have sufficed for her. However, she now cited the words وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ (*and they forgive the people*). "I have forgiven you." he responded. Knowing her master's soft heartedness, enthusiasm to emancipate slaves and keenness to adhere to the injunctions of the Qur'aan, she did not hesitate to cite the closing phrase of

¹² Tafseer Ash-Sha'raawi (Al-Maktabah Ash-Shaamilah, 2nd Edition)

¹³ Surah Aal-'Imraan *aayaat* 132-133

the *ayyah*: وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (And Allah loves the good-doers). Of course, her master did not disappoint her. "You are free for the pleasure of Allah!" he said.

The Example of Rasulallah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam*

In this regard, examples from the life of Rasulallah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* are many. The most famous one being his forgiveness of the citizens of Makkah on the occasion of the conquest. "O gathering of the Quraish, what do you think I am going to do to you?" he asked them at the end of a brief address which he delivered outside the door of the Ka'bah. "You will treat us well", they replied, "You are a noble brother and the son of a noble brother." He responded: "Go, you are free!"¹⁴ According to some narrations he said, "Well, I repeat to you what Yusuf said to his brothers: لَا تَثْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (There is no reprimand for you today). Go, you are free."

An Interesting Poem

An Arab poet said:

و ان كثرت منه الى الجرائم	سألزم نفسي الصفع عن كل مذنب
شريف و مشروف و مثل مقاوم	فما الناس الا واحد من ثلاثة
و أتبع فيه الحق و الحق لازم	فأما الذى فوقى فأعرف فضله
اجابته عرضى و ان لام لائم	و أما الذى دونى فان قال صنت عن
تفضلت ان الحلم للفضل حاكم	و أما الذى مثلى فان زل أو هفا

*I compel myself to overlook every transgressor
Even if his transgression against me is tremendous.*

¹⁴ Seerah Ibn Hishaam (Ma'a Ar-Raud Al-Unf) V.4 Pg.171

*People are of three types only:
Superior, inferior and equal.*

*I recognize the excellence of the person higher than me
Thus I acknowledge the truth; and the truth is unavoidable.
If a person lower than me speaks, I protect my honour from
answering him even if I am criticized.*

*And if my equal slips or errs
I show courtesy; certainly tolerance is the judge of excellence.*

Conclusion

In conclusion, I quote a statement of Fudail bin 'Iyaad. He said:

من طلب أخا بلا عيب بقى بلا أخ

*"The one who seeks a brother (friend) who does not err will be
left without a brother."*

Abu Hudhaifa Muhammed Karolia
Al-Jaami'ah Al-Mahmoodiah
Springs