The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
Shaikh
‘Abdu’l-Razzāq Ibn ‘Abdu’l-Muḥsin al-Badr

Explanation to the
GREATEST INVOCATION
for FORGIVENESS
being a translation of his
‘Sharḥ Ḥadith Sayyid al-Istighfār’
The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"Learn all of you, the Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (Sayyid al-Istighfār)!"

[AL-NASĀ'I IN AL-KUBRĀ, #10301-10302]
EXPLANATION TO

The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness

by Shaikh 'Abdu'l-Razzāq Ibn 'Abdu'l-Muḥsin al-Badr

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"Allāhumma Anta Rabbī, lā-ilaha illā Anta, khalaqtanī wa anā ‘abduk, wa anā ‘ala ‘ahdika wa wa‘dika mas-ta‘tu, A‘ūdhu bika min shari mā-ṣan‘atu. Abū’u laka bini‘amateka ‘aliyā, wa abū’u laka bi-dhanbi, faghfir li fa-‘innahu lā yaghfiru al-dhunūba illā Anta.”

"O Allāh, You are my Lord! None has the right to be worshipped but you. You created me and I am Your slave, and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise (to You) as much as I can. I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So I implore You to forgive my sins, for nobody can forgive sins except You.”
CHAPTER ONE

Explanation to the Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness

All praises due to Allah, we praise Him, seek His assistance, and ask His forgiveness. And we seek refuge in Allah from the evil of ourselves and the wickedness of our deeds. Verily whomever Allah guides there is none to take him astray; and whomever Allah allows to stray, there is none to guide. I bear witness that there is nothing worthy of worship but Allah, He is one and has no partners; and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and last Messenger. May Allah send His choicest blessing and Peace upon Muhammad, his Companions and all his Family.

As to what follows:

Indeed the matter of forgiveness (istighfar) requires repentance (maghfa) of one’s sins. This is amongst the most important of matters for a Muslim in his daily life. A person should take seriously and be extremely concerned about (seeking) forgiveness as there are many verses in the Book of Allah, the Most High,
and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) that constantly prompt us to seek forgiveness. These primary sources mention the advantages and benefits of seeking forgiveness, especially for those who make it habitual.

Allāh said:

قُلْ يَبْعَدُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَنفُسَ الْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ فَتُغْفِرْ نَفْسَاهُمْ إِنَّهُ الْغُفْرَانُ الْمُبْلِغُ

“Say: ‘O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. Indeed, Allāh forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.’”

[al-Zumar (39): 53]

Some of our righteous predecessors said that this verse was indeed the most motivating and hopeful verse in the Qur’ān.¹

Allāh inspired us to seek forgiveness by explaining its merits (fadl) and what we could harvest from it, in this world and the Hereafter. He mentioned about Prophet Nūh (‘alayhis-salām) thus:

فَأَسْأَلُ رَبِّي وَيَسْأَلُونَ عَذَابًا عَمَّا ظَلَّوا فِي دُنْيَتَهُمْ
وَيَسْأَلُونَ عَذَابًا عَمَّا ظَلَّوا فِي أَدْخَالِهِمْ

“And said: ‘Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send [rain from]

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the sky upon you in [continuing] showers. And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers.”

[Nūḥ (71):10-12]

These great verses essentially provide succour and conclude the blessings and benefits of seeking forgiveness from Allāh.

It is recorded that when al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (may Allāh’s mercy be upon him) was approached by a man complaining about his infertility. He replied advising, ‘Seek forgiveness from Allāh.’ Another man complained about his poverty and a third complained about the drought of his garden, and another about his disability to have children. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī replied to all this in the same manner, “Seek forgiveness from Allāh”\(^2\)

His advice to all those complaining about their situation was to, “Seek forgiveness”, and then he read for them the above verses.\(^3\)

These are some of the advantages that we harvest in this world, while greater recompense and immense reward awaits in the Hereafter. The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said in an authentic ḥadīth: “Glad tidings for him who finds in his record (of deeds), abundant ḥusnā’.”\(^4\)

And there are numerous ḥadīth that advise us to seek forgiveness and explain the advantages of that. From the ḥadīth of Anas Ibn Mālik (radiy Allāhu ‘anhu) found in the Sunan of al-Tirmidhī: “O

\(^2\) Mentioned by Ḥāfīẓ in Fath al-Bārī, vol.11, p.98.

\(^3\) Nūḥ (71):10-12

\(^4\) Ibn Mājah, #3818—authenticated by Albānī in Sahīḥ al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaghīr, #3825.
son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds in the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth, and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it."

So from this ḥadith, we can see clearly where Allāh says: “O son of Adam, were your sins to reach “anān al-samā””; some say this means, “clouds in the sky” and others say it refers to “what can be seen with the naked eye.”

“and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you.” Even though there was repetition of sins, Allāh will forgive him if he sincerely repents.

Abū Hurayrah (raḍī Allāhu ‘anhu) narrated that he heard Messenger of Allāh (ṣallī Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) say: “By Allāh, I seek Allāh’s forgiveness and repent to Him more than seventy times a day.”

Allāh had forgiven him of all his past and future, yet he sought forgiveness more than hundred times a day. And as Ibn ‘Umar (raḍī Allāhu ‘anhu) reported: ‘In a single gathering, we counted the Prophet (ṣallī Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) mention hundred times before standing,

“Rabbighfur li watub ‘alayya Inaka Anta al-Tawwāb al-

5 Tirmidhī, #3540, Darāmī, #2788, graded as ḥasan by Albānī in Silsilah Ahādīth as-Sahihah, #127.
6 Bukhārī, #6307.
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Rahim.”

“My Lord, forgive me and accept my repentance; verily, You alone accept repentance, the Forgiving.”

He (ﷻ) used to seek forgiveness regularly.

Also from the narration of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim; on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (rādī Allāhu ‘anhu), he said: the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) said: “I swear by Him in whose hand is my soul, if you were a people who did not commit sin, Allāh would take you away and replace you with a people who would sin and then seek Allāh’s forgiveness so He could forgive them.”

Allāh, the Most High, loves to forgive and loves those who repent. Among His Beautiful Names (al-Asmāʾ al-Husnā) are (الغفور) al-ʿAfūww (the Forgiving), (الغفر) al-Ghafūr (the Ever-Forgiving) and (الغفر) al-Ghaffār (the All-Forgiving). Allāh loves that we seek forgiveness with His Names, and worship Him according to His Names.

“And to Allāh belong the best names, so invoke Him by them.”

[al-ʿAraf (7): 180]

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7 Reported by Abū Dāwūd, #1516, Ibn Mājah, #3814 and Tirmidhī, #3434, al-Nāṣī′ in al-Kubrā, #10292 and Tirmidhī said it is ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ

8 Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, #4936.

9 For a more detail commentary to these Names refer to book ‘Explanation to the Beautiful and Perfect Names of Allāh’ published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers 2008, Birmingham, UK.
As for the hadith mentioned in Bukhārī and Muslim by Abū Hurayrah (radiyAllāhu ‘anhu):

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: “Allāh has ninety-nine Names, and whoever preserves them will enter Paradise.”

To preserve these Names is not like what some people are doing where they write them down on a piece of paper and read them, but there are three levels to preserve His Names:

- The first level is to memorise (hifz) them
- The second level is to understand (fahm) their meanings
- The third level is to use them in prayer (du‘ā) by acknowledging His Supreme authority

For example, we know one of His Name is (الثواب) al-Tawwāb (the Oft-Returning) and we use this frequently (in prayers), we understand the meaning as ‘The One who accepts repentance (tawbah)’ and therefore follow it up with actions that qualify this understanding. We ask the Most Forgiving to pardon all our sins. We do likewise with all of His other Names (Asmā’), memorise and understand His Attributes (Sifāt) correctly and steer clear of wrong interpretations and out right denial of it!

Our understanding is far removed from any false concepts. We understand them how our righteous predecessors (salaf) understood. (الغفور) al-‘Afūww (the Forgiving), (الغافر) al-Ghafūr (the Ever-Forgiving) and (الغافر) al-Ghaffār (the All-Forgiving); these are from the Names of Allāh that necessitate seeking forgiveness constantly, and showing sincere repentance (tawbah) and humbleness (inābah)

10 Bukhārī, #2736, #6410, #7392 and Muslim, #4836.
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to Allāh. Verily the forgiveness of Allāh is not for everyone but for those who puts forth deeds that earn forgiveness and refrain from deeds that repel it.

Generally, the conditions of forgiveness are as mentioned in the Book of Allāh:

إنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُعْفُرُ مِنْ نَظْرِهِ مَا يُقَدِّمُونَ
 ذَلَّلَ لَنِعْمَاتُهُ مَا يَعْفُرُونَ

Verily, Allāh forgives not that partners should be set up with Him (in worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills.”

[al-Nisā’ (4): 48]

Allāh’s forgiveness (maghfira) therefore, reaches the one who deserve it and those who make effort to repent wholeheartedly. The main verse that outlines the factors which lead to forgiveness of sins (dhunūb) is:

وَلَيْلَيْنَـُوَلْـُأَفَّارِلَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَـَ ~

“But indeed, I am the Perpetual Forgiver of whoever repents and truly believes, does righteous and correct deeds, and then remains constant upon right guidance.”

[TāHā (20: 82]

There are certain pre-requisites necessary in attaining forgiveness

وَلِيَلْغَفَّارِنَّ تَابَ وَمَانَ

“All indeed, I am the Perpetual Forgiver of whoever repents and believes.”
That we should endeavour to fulfil, namely; staying away from the sins altogether, regretting (nad̄m) the sins committed and pledge ('az̄m) not to return to it again.

وَعَمَّانَ

"...truly believes..."

He truly believes in Allāh, His Angels, His Books and His Messengers and all that he has Commanded you to believe in

وَعَمَّلَ صَبِيعًا

“does righteous and correct deeds”

He who performs righteous deeds (al-a‘m̄āl al-s̄āliha), and one who is steadfast in all the commandments of Islām like prayer, fasting, remembrance of Allāh, fear of Allāh and paying attention towards them and all other good deeds openly (zhāirah) and in secret (qalbiyah).

ثُمَّ أَهْتَدَى

“then remains constant upon right guidance”

Then he is steadfast in all of that, he does not violate nor turn back, he persists upon them until his last breath; and whoever does that, Allāh will forgive his sin (dhanb) and conceal (sitr) his defects ('ayb) and he will be among the people who attain the forgiveness of Allāh, the One full of Glory and Honour.

It was mentioned earlier that repentance nullifies the past, or wipes away all past sins. There is no act of good deed that can wipe away past sins altogether beside tawbah (repentance). For those who repent to Allāh from his sins, Allāh will forgive his sins even if they are abundant like the foam on the ocean.
Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

ُقُلْ يَعْبَدُونَ الَّذِينَ أُنْسَوْا عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا فَضْلًا مِنْنَا

رَحِبَةُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

"Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. Indeed, Allāh forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.'"

[al-Zumar (39): 53]

Allāh will forgive sinners regardless of the amount or the types of sins committed, as long one has not ascribed partners (shirk) to Him. Whenever they repent to Allāh, Allāh will forgive.

Seeking forgiveness has a great status in Islām, as Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah said: 'That the act of repentance may take a man away from an offensive act and towards a pleasing habit, and from being deficient towards perfection. A man is raised from a lowly rank to a higher and better position. Thus a servant becomes a servant of Allāh who is aware of his Lord every day, every hour and every minute. He increases his knowledge about Allāh and is aware of his religion and his bond with Allāh. He ponders about Allāh even when eating, drinking, sleeping and while awake. He subconsciously submits to Allāh’s Will in all his words or actions and so on. Due to the presence of his heart on a high level, and by giving it (the heart) its rights, he will then see his shortcomings become more evident. Nevertheless, he still requires the need to seek forgiveness day and night, in reality he is desperately in need of forgiveness in all his speech and action, what is apparent and what is hidden—as this will help to improve his affairs and receive goodness. It will also prevent harm and increase the
strength and determination to perform deeds; be it of spiritual or physical nature.\(^{11}\)

This short treatise is intended to explain the tremendous way of seeking forgiveness \((istighfar)\) found in the Sunnah of the Prophet \((\text{SAW})\). The people of knowledge have mentioned as being the most excellent and most complete form of seeking forgiveness; therefore it is important to memorising it’s wording, to understanding it correctly and to acting upon it.

On the authority of Shaddād Ibn Aws \((rādiyAllāhu ‘anhu)\) that the Prophet \((\text{SAW})\) said, “The Greatest Invocation for forgiveness is that the servant says:

\[
\text{Allāhumma Anta Rabbī, lā-ilaha illā Anta, khalaqtanī}
\text{wa 'abdūk, wa anā 'ala 'ahdika wa wa'dika mas-taṭa'tu, A'ūdhu bika min shari ma-san'at. Abū'u laka}
\text{bīni'amateka 'aliyā, wa abū'u laka bi-dhanbī, faghfir lī}
\text{fa-innahu lā yaghfiru al-dhunūba illā Anta.}
\]

“Allāhumma Anta Rabbī, lā-ilaha illā Anta, khalaqtanī
wa 'abdūk, wa anā 'ala 'ahdika wa wa'dika mas-
taṭa'tu, A'ūdhu bika min shari ma-san'at. Abū'u laka
bīni'amateka 'aliyā, wa abū'u laka bi-dhanbī, faghfir lī
fa-innahu lā yaghfiru al-dhunūba illā Anta.”

“O Allāh, You are my Lord! None has the right to be worshipped but you. You created me and I am Your slave, and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise (to You) as much as I can. I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So I entreat You to forgive my sins, for nobody can forgive sins except You.”

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The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Whoever says it during the day with firm faith in it and dies on the same day before the evening, he would be from the people of Paradise; and whoever recites it at night with firm faith in it and dies before the morning, he will be from the people of Paradise.”

In some other narrations: “he will enter paradise”

And in another narration: “except that he would be guaranteed paradise”

This prayer (du‘ā) is encouraged to be read in the morning and evening, thus a man of prudence and knowledge (‘ilm) will act as such. If he recites it at night before the morning, he will be from the people of Paradise and if he recites it at night before the morning, he will be from the people of Paradise.

This ḥadīth of Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī was mentioned in the ‘Kitāb al-da‘awāt’ (Book of Prayers) under the chapter, ‘Bāb afṣal al-Istighfār’ (Chapter on the most excellent of Seeking Forgiveness). Al-Bukhārī also mentioned this ḥadīth in another chapter in, ‘Kitāb al-da‘awāt’ (Book of Prayers) which he titled ‘Bāb mā yaqul idhā asbah’ (Chapter of what one should say in the morning).

This shows that Imām Bukhārī was of the opinion that the ḥadīth of ‘The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness’ is the most excellent and most complete form of seeking forgiveness.

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12 Bukhārī, #6306, #6323.

13 It is from the narration of Bukhārī, #6323.

14 Tirmidhī, #3393.
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If we ponder on the meaning of the ḥadīth, we realise that this immense prayer encompasses profound dispositions for the one who reads it; like assuming humility, meekness, submission and letting the reader grasp the supreme sovereignty of Allāh and His blessings. We come to understand that none forgives sins except Allāh, therefore, we arrive at the conclusion that this prayer is worthy of being called ‘The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (ṣayyid al-istighfār)’—the leading prayer through which forgiveness is sought.

There is no other ḥadīth reported from Shaddād Ibn Aws (rādīy Allāhu ‘anḥu) except this ḥadīth that is found in the collection of Imām Bukhārī. This ḥadīth is also only found in Ṣāḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, and there are no other reports regarding this from Ṣāḥīḥ of Imām Muslim. Some of the Imāms of Sunan, like al-Nasā’ī and al-Tirmidhī reported a similar ḥadīth with different wordings, which again reflects the importance of learning this prayer for istighfār.

In the narration of Imām Tirmidhī, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Shall I tell you the Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (ṣayyid al-istighfār)?”¹⁵

And in the narration of Imām Nasā’ī, he (ﷺ) said, “Learn all of you, the Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (ṣayyid al-istighfār)!”¹⁶

In this ḥadīth, there is encouragement to learn this greatest method (al-sīgha al-‘azīma) of seeking forgiveness (istighfār) from

¹⁵ Tirmidhī, #3393—authenticated by Albānī in Silsilah Aḥādith al-Ṣaḥīḥ, #1747.

¹⁶ Al-Nasā’ī in al-Kubrā, #10301-10302; ḥadīth on the authority of Jābir (rādīy Allāhu ‘anḥu)
There are other variations of this hadith reported from Abū Hurayrah, Ibn ‘Umar, Ibn Mas‘ūd, Ibn Abza and Buraydah (radī Allāhu ‘anhum). However, the narration we mentioned from Shaddād Ibn Aws (radī Allāhu ‘anhu) contains the wording that is found in Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

It is incumbent that we first memorise this du‘ā’ (prayer) which the Prophet (ﷺ) described as the ‘The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (sayyid al-istighfār)’ and become accustomed to using it each morning and evening, with the intention to understand its meanings, definitions and purpose.

Some of the scholars said that the advantage and preference of this prayer is that it contains all the qualities to be ‘sayyid al-Istighfār’. ‘The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness (sayyid al-istighfār)’ is the most common name used.  

Below are the meanings of the prayer word for word:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said in commencing the prayer: ‘That the Servant says ...“the word,

\[\text{Allāhumma} \]

“Allāhumma”

O Allāh!

means by agreement, ‘O Allāh! (يا الله—Ya Allāh)’ and it is a word whose meaning occur frequently in most of the prayers in the

Ibn al-Qayyim (rahimahullah) said, “There is no dispute that the word ‘Allahumma’ means ‘O Allāh! (Yā Allāh),’ therefore it is not supposed to be used except when making prayer. One should not say:

اللَّهُمَّ غَفْرُوكَ رَحْيمٌ

“O Allāh, The Most Forgiving Most Merciful’

but rather he says:

اللَّهُمَّ افْغَرِي وَأَرْحَمِي

“O Allāh forgive me and have mercy on me.”

Followed by the saying:

Allāhumma Anta Rabbi, lā-ilaha illā Anta, khalaqtani wa and ‘abduk.”

“O Allāh, You are my Lord! None has the right to be worshipped but you. You created me and I am Your slave.”

It combines two types of Tawhid in this sentence. Al-Ma‘rifah (knowledge) and al-Ithbāt (affirmation) and al-Iradāh (intention) and al-Talāb (worship).

Thus the two types of Tawhid that we are commanded to assert and believe in, is divided into two categories:
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1) Tawhīd al-Ma’rifah wa’l-Ithbāt (Tawhīd with regard to that which one must know and affirm).

2) Tawhīd al-‘Irādā wa’l-‘Iltāb (Tawhīd with regard to one’s intentions and worship).

Tawhīd al-Ma’rifah and al-Ithbāt are inherent to declaring the Oneness of Lordship and to be aware that Allāh is The Creator (al-Khaliq), The Provider (al-Rażiq), the One who grants all blessings (al-Mun’im), the One who grants all blessings, (al-Mutassarif), the One who alone is in control of all the affairs (al-Mudabbir) of His creation and also to declare faith (iqrâr) in His Names (Asma) and Attributes (Sifāt) that are mentioned in the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).

Thus the Tawhīd of al-Ma’rifah and al-Ithbāt concludes Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyyah (belief in the unique Oneness of Lordship), and Tawhīd al-Asmâ’ wa’l-Sifāt (belief in Allāh’s Names and Attributes) because what we are told is to acknowledge (i’tirāf) and declare (iqrâr). Knowing Allāh is alone in His Actions (afâl)—like in His creating (khalq), sustaining (al-riżq), blessings (al-in’ām), giving life (al-iḥya) and death (al-imāt) etc—we must also declare and acknowledge His Glorified Names (Asmâ’ al-Husnâ) and His lofty high Attributes (Sifāt al-‘Ulâ).

The second category is Tawhīd al-‘Irādāh and al-‘Iltāb, which is Tawhīd al-Ibâdab—to direct worship to Allāh alone with sincere (ikhlâs) intention, and that all the good deeds are for Allāh and only Him alone.

Therefore this ḥadîth is a combination of the two Tawhīds. Firstly, where he (ﷺ) said
"Allāhumma Anta Rabbi."

"O Allah, You are my Lord!"

then he said

"khalaqtani"

"You created me"

which is Tawḥīd al-Maʿrīfah and al-Iḥbāt, declaration of the One- ness of Allāh and that He is the Creator (al-Khāliq) and there is no creator other than Him.

Then he said:

"lā-ilaha illā Anta"

"None has the right to be worshipped but you."

and

"anā ‘abduka"

"I am your slave"

—this is Tawḥīd al-Iṣrādah and al-Talāb which is sincere submis- sion to Allāh.
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Thus this prayer began with the two type of *Tawhid* that constitute the core of faith. To uphold the two is far greater than to sustain anything else.

Then the phrase

\[
\text{خَلَقْتُني وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ}
\]

"khalaqtani wa ana 'abduka"

“You created me and I am your slave”

proves a fact affirmed by scholars that *Tawhid al-Rubùbiyyah* is always related to *Tawhid al-'Uluhiyyah*. Thus, if a person declares that there is no Creator but Allâh, it is incumbent for him to worship nothing but Him alone. When there is no partner for Him in (His Attribute of) creating, then there can be no partner for Him in worship.

\[
\text{خَلَقْتُني وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ}
\]

"khalaqtani wa ana 'abduka"

“You created me and I am your slave”

since there is no Creator for me besides You, there is no Lord to be worshipped besides You. You alone determine my sustenance, my life, my death and therefore I will not worship anyone except You. I will neither humble nor degrade myself and ask or plead with anyone except You. You are the One who made me from nothing.

When a person knows that there is no creator but Allâh, none who provides but Allâh, none who gives blessings except Allâh, none who governs all of the creation but Him, would he then go
and pray at the graves of so an so, and plead at the tomb of a dead person? Where is the faith (that he declared)?

Those who understand that Allāh is the only Creator will worship Him alone. Oneness of God in Lordship (Tawhid al-Rubūbiyyah) is mentioned numerously in the Qur‘ān, and about His Abilities to sustain, give life and death—all of which are a declaration of faith in worship (Tawhid al-‘Ulūbiyyah):

وَأَتَايْتَهُمْ فَاَعْبَدُونِ

"...and I am your Lord; so worship Me."

[al-Anbiya’ (21): 92]

Meaning, “just as there is no Lord (Rabb) for you besides Me, there is nothing worthy (ma‘būd) for you to worship but Me.”

Allāh said,

يَا آيَاتُ النَّاسِ إِنَّمَا ذَكَرْنَاكُمْ فَعْلَمْنَٰكُمْ مَثْلَمْحَا لَا أَوَّلَ مُقَلِّدٍ

أَلَوْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْجُلُودِ

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ فَرَضاً وَالسَّمَاءَ نِيَائِدًا وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ

يُهِيدَ مِنْهُ الْمَرْبَّاتِ وَ ذَٰلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ وَذَٰلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous. [He] who made for you the earth a bed [spread out] and the sky a ceiling and sent down from the sky, rain and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you. So do not attribute to Allāh equals while you know [that
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there is nothing similar to Him]."

[al-Baqarah (2): 21-22]

Those mentioned in this verse are people who take rivals (andād) and partners (shuraka') in worshipping Allāh. Ibn Abbās (radiy Allāhu 'anhuma) said, "Do not make association in worship when you know. Verily there is no other Creator for you besides Allāh."¹⁹

It is a tremendous disgrace (ashadu al-'ajb) for those who ask any other besides Allāh, who plead to other than Him and seek protection from something that neither benefits nor harms him, while forgetting the Creator, the Sustainer and the One who Benefits. Allāh is the One who harms, the One who blesses and the One who Guides the affairs of all of the creation.

It is a sad to see the condition of people nowadays, those who say they belong to Islām and declare there is no Creator but Allāh, even saying ‘La ilāha illAllāh’ yet we see them going to tombs and graveyards, the tomb of al-Badawī, the tombs of Zaynab and Nafisah and others. They make sacrifices, oaths, beseech, pray and hope. They stand meekly, ask, and humble themselves. They do all these acts of worship solely for the grave that does not harm or benefit.

Allāh said:

"Say: ‘Invoke those you have claimed [as gods] besides

¹⁹ Reported by Ṭabārī in his tafsir, #486 and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his tafsir, #229.
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Him, for they do not possess the [ability for] removal of adversity from you or [for its] transfer [to someone else]."

[al-İsra’ (17): 56]

and

قُلِ اذُّوَا الْلَّهُ وَرَحْمَتَهُ رَبَّكُمْ ۛ دُونَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَا فِيهَا وَالْحَمْدُ لَهُ وَلَا يُنَفِّقُ السَّمَوَاتُ وَلَا الْأَرْضُ وَمَا فِيهِمَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَهُ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

“Say, [O Muhammad], ‘Invoke those you claim [as deities]besides Allah.’ They do not possess an atom’s weight [of ability] in the heavens or on the earth, and they do not have therein any partnership [with Him], nor is there for Him from among them any assistant. And intercession does not benefit with Him except for one whom He permits. [And those wait] until, when terror is removed from their hearts, they will say [to one another], ‘What has your Lord said?’ They will say, ‘The truth.’ And He is the Most High, the Grand.”

[Sabã’ (34): 22-23]

He forgets and is ignorant to the fact that the One he should ask, beseech, depend on and worship is Allah alone, the Creator. Thus the hadîth provides great spiritual guidance in directing us (to the correct way of prayer).

Then it says:
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لا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنتَ

"lā-ilaha illā Anta"

"None has the right to be worshipped save you."

This is a confirmation in declaring Allāh’s Ulūhiyyah (worship). This great phrase in the prayer is upon which the cause of the whole of creation rests. It is the phrase that makes the sky and the earth firm and brings the existence of Paradise and Hell fire into being.

There are two types of people: The joyful people and those who are sorrowful—the people of Paradise and the people of Hell fire. The people of Shahādah ‘Lā ilāha illallāh’—are the people of Paradise and the people who disbelieve in it are the people of Hell fire. The prayer hence started with a great declaration.

The scholars explain that this word will not benefit the owner until he fulfils the conditions that are stated in the Qur’ān and Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ). These conditions have been rendered into verse as follows:20

“The seven conditions stated
In the texts of revelation revealed in truth.

Verily it does not benefit the declarer;
by words alone until it is perfected.

with knowledge (‘ilm), certainty (yaqīn), acceptance (qubūl);

--

and submission (inqiyād) you will understand what I say.

Truthfulness (ṣidq), sincerity (ikhlās) and love (mahabba);
May Allāh guide you for the love of Him.

This poem enlightens us of the seven great conditions to “there is no God save Allāh”. There are numerous proofs from the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) regarding this. However, this is not the place to elaborate and quote all of them.21

Then it says

反倒عبُدُكَ
“anā ‘abduka”
“I am your slave”

This is an acknowledgment of servitude (‘ubūdiyyah), and that all of the creation is a slave (‘ibād) of Allāh. There are two types of ‘ubūdiyyah:

1. To enslave oneself to the Lordship of Allāh (‘ubūdiyyah li-rubūbiyyah)
2. To enslave oneself to the Worship of Allāh (‘ubūdiyyah li-‘ulābiyyah)

To enslave oneself to the oneness of Allāh—It is to believe that Allāh is the One who made all of the creation to exist. He creates and gives sustenance, gives life and death. He has no partner in all of the above.

إِنَّكُنَّ مِنْ فِي
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ إِلَآَّ إِلَيْكَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا

21 See the details and proofs in the book, Marij al-Qubūl in Nadhim’s poetry.
“There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant.”

[Maryam (19): 93]

This kind of ‘ubūdiyyah is in everyone. Every creation knows the existence of God because Allah is the One who brought them into existence, provides for them and gives them life and death.

To enslave oneself to the worship of Allah (‘ubūdiyyah li-‘ulūhiyyah)—Allah has made this exclusive only to some of His creations whom He guides with faith and obedience [to the Most Merciful]. Those are the slaves of His Worship (‘ibād li-‘ulūhiyyah). They humble themselves before Allah, obey Him and adhere to His laws; doing only what is commanded and obeying His (chosen) Messengers.

This kind of worship (‘ubūdiyyah li-‘ulūhiyyah) is given specifically to some of Allah’s creation, His Prophets, and the people who follow them. For this reason, He attached them to Himself as an honour as mentioned in the Qur’ān:

وَعَبَّارَالْرَّحْمَنِ

“And the servants of the Most Merciful (al-Rahmān)...”

[al-Furqān (25): 63]

These are the people who were guided, are steadfast in worship, obey Him and abide by His Laws. The meaning of

أَنَا عُبْدُكَ

“I am your slave”
is generally put in the ḥadith of enslaving oneself to the worship of Allāh (‘ubūdiyyah li-‘ulūhiyyah) because the word

خَلَفَتِي

“khalaqtañi”

“You created me”

and the word

أَلْلَهُمْ أَنتَ رَبِّي;

“Allāhumma Anta Rabbi.”

“O Allāh, You are my Lord!”

was (put in the context of) enslaving oneself to the Lordship of Allāh (‘ubūdiyyah li-rubūbiyyah).

The word

أَنَا عَبْدُكَ

“anā ‘abduka”

“I am your slave”

means I am the worshipper of You, an obedient slave to You who fulfils Your command and keeps Your commandment.

It then continues,

وَأَنَا عَلَى اِحْدَاكَ وَعْدُكَ مَاتَطَعْتُ

“wa anā ‘ala ‘ahdika wa wa’dika mas-ta’ta’tu”

“and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise (to
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“You) as much as I can.”

The scholars give few meanings to this. Some said

وَأَنَا عَلَى عَهْدِكَ وَوَعَدْتُكَ مَا استطعت

“wa anā ‘ala ‘ahdika wa wa’dika mas-taṭa’tu”

“and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise (to You) as much as I can.”

means that I pledge to You and I make a covenant that I will strive in faith and worship, and maintain Your laws while remaining steadfast in them the best I can. Allāh will not burden a soul with more than what it can bear and the worshipper who said “I am your servant” is he who firmly holds to Islam as he has made an oath to Allāh and promised that he would continue to have faith and is duty bound to obey Him.

Hence, a servant is in fact making an oath to Allāh in every prayer with sincerity:

إِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

“You alone do we worship, and from You alone do we seek help.”

[al-Fātiḥah (1): 5]

This is a covenant and a pledge to worship Him alone and not worship others, or ask help except from Him. Some of the scholar said that it means, ‘I will abide by the oath I have given in obeying Your commands and shall uphold them the best I can. Allāh had taken an oath from us to be steadfast in faith (īmān), and we have been commanded. This is the servant who makes this prayer ‘O Allāh, verily I am bound by the oath I gave you in faith—standing firm, obeying them and upholding them the best I can.’
It then continues,

\[\text{ما استطعت،} \]

\[\text{mas-ta\textsuperscript{a}tu} \]

\[\text{“as much as I can.”} \]

This includes all levels of ability, and it is from the Mercy of Allāh to this ummah. Some of the scholars said regarding the phrase

\[\text{ما استطعت،} \]

\[\text{mas-ta\textsuperscript{a}tu} \]

\[\text{“as much as I can.”} \]

‘there are conditions for ability, namely to know the weakness and deficiency where one is unable to perfect his faith to its highest level. He knows his weakness and defects and therefore asks not to be taken to task for those weaknesses, flaws and deficiencies.

Allāh says:

\[\text{لا يكلف الله نفساً إلا وسعها} \]

\[\text{“Allāh burdens not a person beyond his scope.”} \]

\[\text{[al-Baqarah (2): 286]} \]

There is a ḥadīth where Allāh says: “I did”\(^{22}\)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “If I order you with something then do as much of it as you are able to, and if I forbid you from something,

\[\text{Muslim, #180 on the authority of Ibn Abbās (rādiy Allāhu ‘anhumā)} \]
then keep away from it.”23

The scholars have explained that whenever there is a command, there is a correlation with ability. Some things cannot be done by some people or they are able to do it but could not perfect it. Thus it is done with ability, however the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “if I forbid you from something then keep away from it”, he did not say ‘keep away as much as you are able’.

The scholars said: ‘The forbidden act should be abandoned, and to abandon is within everyone’s ability’—everyone is able to abandon adultery, stealing or killing etc. What Allāh has forbidden is within the ability of every man. Nobody should say: ‘I cannot leave this sin.’ Only the one who is corrupted and enslaved to his desire to do the forbidden things (Allāh forbid) will do that. Thus there is no connection between forbidden things and ability.

The word

٨٠٣

“mas-taţa‘tu”

“as much as I can.”

emphasises that no one can keep all the commandments that Allāh has made obligatory for them. No one can promise to achieve perfect obedience, or be extremely grateful for each and every blessings given to them, thus Allāh bestowed His Mercy upon people. He does not burden them with something that they can’t bear. The person who is struggling (to uphold his covenant) has been honest to Allāh with his obedience, gratefulness and

23 Bukhāri, #7288 and Muslim #2380 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (raḍiyyAllāhu ‘anhu)
declaration on faith, which is beyond his ability. Verily Allāh knows what the eyes deceive and what the chests conceal.

The prayer then reads,

أَبُوَّ لَكَ

"Abū’u laka"

"I acknowledge before You."

meaning that I acknowledge and admit to all the blessings Allāh has given me and (in return) I admit the sins I’ve committed. Thus this phrase is a combination between realising ability and exposing the shortcoming of one’s own self and actions.

By realising one’s ability one shall love and be grateful to the one who blesses and bestows kindness (Allāh), whereas exposing shortcomings leads to one humbling himself, and repenting all the time. He does not see his Lord except as the One who is Kind and Great, and does not see himself except as a sinner with many flaws.

Then it says:

بِنَعْمَتِكَ

"bini'amateka"

"all the blessings You have bestowed"

to acknowledge all the blessings of Allāh, because the word ‘blessing’ (in Arabic) is a ‘dependant singular’ (mufrad mudhaf). The theory is that if a singular depends on a plural then the word does not specify one particular blessing, rather a vast range. It says
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بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيِّ

"bini'amateka 'aliya"

"all the blessings You have bestowed upon me"

meaning I acknowledge and declare with all Your blessings you have blessed me with, and all the blessings are indeed from Allah Glory be to Him. He is the Giver and the owner of all (these blessings):

وَمَا يَكُونُ مِنَٰ عَفَوًٰنِي إِلَّا مَا كَانَ عَفِي صُرُطِ الْحَقِّ إِلَيْهِ يَشَاءُونَ

“And whatever you have of favour—it is from Allah. Then when adversity touches you, to Him you cry for help.”

[al-Nahl (16): 53]

Hence all the blessings come from Allah. The phrase

أَبُوُّكَ بُنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيِّ

“Abū’u laka bini‘amateka ‘aliya”

“I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me.”

is an acknowledgment to all of Allah’s blessings, the blessing of ʿiman, the blessing of health, the blessing of children, the blessing of land, the blessing of house and all other blessings. There are no blessings that come from other than Allah.

Allah said:
“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favour]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.’”

[Ibrāhīm (14): 7]

If a person knows that all the blessings are from Allāh alone, and there is no partner or associate (sharīk) with Him in that, he shall be grateful for that with his heart, words and actions. He knows that everything comes from Allāh and so he doesn’t use these blessings to sin against Allāh. This is the basis of acknowledging and declaring that Allāh is granting him the blessings and chose him to have all that.

Then it says

“wa abū’u laka bi-dhanbī.”

“and I confess to You all my sins.”

which means I admit and acknowledge my sins. The scholars have two different meanings on this:

First: I know of my sins, by which I have not been completely grateful to Your blessings since the word implies that I know I’ve been less grateful for the blessings.

Second: To understand the position of sins only, implying that I know my sins and my mistakes, and every error comes from
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me—thus a person knows he is a sinner and has defects towards (fulfilling) the rights of Allāh. This is the first step towards repentance (i.e. to acknowledge sin); however if he sins and does wrong and abandons divine commandments, he continues to ignore it and doesn’t feel he is going wrong by the sin, then this repentance is far from being accepted unless he becomes guided to see the reasons and shown the way.

Perhaps from these two meaning, the closest is the second one since to know our deficiency and the state of sin is an invite to keep asking for forgiveness. This is indeed provides a great meaning to the ḥadīth.

Then it says:

“I acknowledge Your favour upon me and I acknowledge my sin”

“Abū’u laka bini’amateka ‘aliyā, wa abū’u laka bidhanbi.”

“I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins.”

making it clear to us that a person’s life consists of two things: The blessings he is given by Allāh for which he needs to be thankful (shukr); and the sins that occur and degrade him for which he need to seek forgiveness from.

This prayer concludes both of them, some of the salaf said: ‘Verily I wake up between blessings and sins, thus I want to be
grateful for the blessings and seek forgiveness from the sins.\(^{24}\)

There is a great lesson can be taken from this hadith, that whoever acknowledges his sins and then repents, Allāh will surely forgive him no matter how vast the sin is, so long he acknowledges and admits that by saying, “I am a sinner, I know I have committed a sin, hence forgive me as there is none who can forgive except You.”

Whoever does both of them (acknowledgement of sin and seeking forgiveness), then his will be forgiven. This is what the hadith is stating, and there is a clear evidence from a another hadith from the incidence of the Ḥif (different source (of hadith)—the hadith of Al-Ḥif\(^{25}\) where the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Verily when a servant acknowledges his sin and then repents, Allāh will forgive him.”\(^{26}\)

This brings clarity to the explanation of the hadith of ‘Sayyid al-İstîghfār’.

Then it states at the end of the prayer,

قَانُوۡنُ اللَّهِ وَقَانُوۡنُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا أَنتَ

“faghfir li fa-innahu lā yaghfiru al-dhunūba illā Anta.”

“So I entreat You to forgive my sins, for nobody can


\(^{25}\) A lengthy hadith relating to the controversy involving ‘Ā’ishah and Safwān (rādiy Allāhu ‘anhumā).

\(^{26}\) Bukhārī, #2661, #4141 and Muslim, #4974 on the authority of ‘Ā’ishah (rādiy Allāhu ‘anha).
forgive sins except You.”

—this is where a person understands that Allāh alone who can forgive, He is the one who accept repentance from His servants, hence a person shall focus that his repentance, seeking forgiveness, plead and pray is for Allāh alone. There is none to forgive sins except Him.

وَمَن يَعْفَفْ عِنْدَكَ إِلَّآ أَنَا

“and who is there to forgive sins except Allāh?”
[Āl-ʾImlān (3): 135]

In general terms, the ḥadith contains two matters of immense value: Tawhid and Istighfār (Affirming the Oneness of Allāh and seeking repentance). These two are from the most important of affairs. They comprise a great combination within one’s prayer, and they have always been coupled together in the Qur’ān and Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Allāh said:

فَأَطْلِقُ أَنَّهُ لَإِلَّا إِلَّآ أَنَا أَنَّيْلَدُ عِنْدَكَ لَا يَضُرُّكَ وَأَسْتَغْفِرْ لِيَدْيِكَ

“So know, [O Muhammad], that there is no deity except Allāh and ask forgiveness for your sin and for the believing men and believing women. And Allāh knows of your movement and your resting place.”
[Muhammad (47): 19]

The above profoundly beautiful verse mentions a combination of Tawhid and Istighfār. Allāh also Mentioned the story of Prophet Yunūs (‘alayhis-salām):
"And he called out within the darknesses, 'There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers.'"

[al-Anbiya' (21): 87]

There is present here also, a combination of the two in the verse:

"So take a straight course to Him and seek His forgiveness."

[Fussilat (41): 6]

There are amongst many verses and hadith where both of these tremendous elements are combined together (Tawhid and Istighfar). Declaring that there is none worthy of worship except Allâh with truthfulness and sincerity wipes away shirk—big or small, ignorantly or knowingly, the past and present, the hidden and the seen and from all types of sins.

Asking forgiveness wipes away everything that a person had committed and also wipes away sins that had shirk in it. In fact all sins are considered to have (some element of) shirk in them, so therefore establishing Tawhid removes the core of shirk, and forgiveness wipes the branches (of shirk).

Thus the best way to glorify Allâh is to say

'La Ilaha IllAllâh'
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and the best du‘ā’ is to say

أَسْتَغْفِرْ اللَّهُ

‘Astaghfirullah’

—both of which are mentioned in the hadith of sayyid al-istighfār.

In concluding, indeed the prayer of sayyid al-istighfār contains within it, great meanings and profound points of benefit and explanation that indicate as to why it was called sayyid al-istighfār, amongst them are:

1. Acknowledgement of Allāh’s Divinity (‘ulūbiyyah) and sole right to be worshipped (‘ubūdiyyah).
2. Acknowledging Allāh as the sole Creator.
3. Acknowledgement of the Covenant that Allāh has taken from His servants
4. Having hope of what has been promised for them.
5. Seeking protection from the evil that occurs from one’s soul.
6. To assign all blessings to the owner and giver, being Allāh alone.
7. To assign all errors and sin to oneself.
8. Having hope of being forgiven and the acknowledging that none but Allāh alone is able to give that.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allāh have mercy upon him) said, ‘Istighfār implies attesting to Allāh’s Rubūbiyyah and Ulūbiyyah, and knowing that He is the Creator of the Universe, thus he begins with (acknowledging) his weakness in fulfilling Allāh’s right upon him and knowing that he is a slave whose forelock is in Allāh’s Hands and in His grip, from which he can never run away from—as he

has no protector except Him. Then he earnestly strives to fulfil his oath towards keeping to Allâh’s Commands and Prohibitions; an oath that came through the tongue of His Messenger.

And all that I do, is according to my ability and not to what You truly deserve—verily none of mankind is capable of that, and it is only a little effort which is within my own means. Therefore I am a believer to the rewards You have promised to the people who are obedient, and the punishment to the people who sin.

Thus I stand to what I have promised and believe to what has been promised for me. I then turn and come towards You to protect me from all the evil that I do against Your Commands and Prohibitions. Otherwise I will be affected by all the evil that has surrounded me. Indeed to abandon Your right is the core reason for one’s destruction.

I therefore declare and acknowledge my sins to You. From You is the goodness, kindness and grace, whereas from me is all the sin and evil. I ask You to forgive me, to wipe away my sins and cleanse me from evil. Verily there is no one who can forgive sins except You, therefore this prayer is the Master of all Prayers because it guarantees the purest of worship.28

We have to adhere to this prayer and make it as our (core dhikr) remembrance of Allâh in the day and night. We should memorise the phrases completely; and the best is to memorise the exact words in the way they have been taught from the hadîth of Bukhârî. We should memorise these phrases and read them regularly in the morning after the Fajr prayer, and in the evening before or after the Maghrib prayer. We ask Allâh the Most generous, Lord of the

28 Madârij al-Sâlikin, vol.1, pp.221-222.
Great Throne with His blessed Names and Attributes to give us sustenance and help us to keep this prayer and all other *adhkār* (remembrances) and duties.

The end of our call is Praise be to Allāh, the Lord of all the worlds. May Allāh send His Peace and blessing upon His servant, the Messenger, our Prophet Muḥammad and all his family and Companions.\(^{29}\)

\(^{29}\) This booklet is based on a lecture wherein I made few amendments to appropriate its method of use. Allāh is the best of Guides.
All praise and thanks are due to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds.

The Wisdom in mentioning *Tawḥīd* alongside Forgiveness

It is for this reason that *tawḥīd* is mentioned alongside asking for forgiveness in many places,

>Faʿqāṭir ʿAllāhu baʿd Allāh ṣallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam liman la yāṣirūn Allāh wa la yāṣirūn lā yāṣirūn

“Know that there is none worthy of worship save Allāh and ask forgiveness for your wrongdoing...”

[Muḥammad (47): 19]

“Do not worship anyone but Allāh! I am a warner and a bringer of good news to you from Him. Ask you Lord for forgiveness and then turn in repentance to Him”

[Hūd (11): 2-3]
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And to ‘Ad we sent their brother Hûd. He said, ‘My people! Worship Allah, there is none worthy of worship save Him; you are merely inventors of falsehood. My people! I do not ask you for any wage for it, my wage is the responsibility of Him who brought me into being, will you not use your intellect? My people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord and then to turn to Him in repentance’”

[Hûd (11): 50-52]

“So take a straight course to Him and ask His forgiveness”

[Fuṣṣilat (41): 6]

The Prophet (ﷺ) advised us to say at the end of the gathering,

“Glory be to You, far removed are You from any imperfection; all praise is due to You. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped save You, I ask Your forgiveness and turn to You.”

If the gathering was one of mercy, this supplication...
THE GREATEST INVOCATION FOR FORGIVENESS

would be like a seal to it; if the gathering was one in which idle speech was indulged in, this supplication would serve as expiation for it.\(^{13}\)

It is also reported that he (ﷺ) used to say upon completing ablution,

\[
\text{أَمْتِيَّنُكَ أَنِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّهُ وَحَدَّهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَمْتِيَّنُكَ أَنِّي مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.}
\]

I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped save Allāh, who has no partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger.

\[
	ext{اللَّهُمَّ اجعلني من الْمَلَكِينَ وَاجعلني من الْمَلَكِينَ.}
\]

O Allāh! Make me amongst the penitent and make me amongst those who purify themselves.\(^{14}\)

This supplication comprises \textit{tawhid} and seeking forgiveness and it commences with the two testifications that form the foundation of this religion—that we not worship any save Allāh and we do not obey any save His Messenger. It is also reported that he (ﷺ) would say,

\[
	ext{مَسْبَحَتَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمَدِكَ، أَمْتِيَّنُكَ أَنِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنتَ، أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتْبَعُ إِلَيْكَ.}
\]

Glory be to You, far removed are You from any imperfection; all praise is due to You. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped save You, I ask

\(^{13}\) The referencing for this follows.

\(^{14}\) Muslim [#234] and Abū Dāwūd [#169, 170]
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Your forgiveness and turn to You.15

This is the supplication that serves as expiation for a gathering and has been legislated to be said at the end of a gathering and upon the completion of ablution. Similarly the Prophet (ﷺ) would say at the end of his prayer,

O Allah! Forgive me for my previous and later [sins], what I have done in secret and in open, for that of which You know better than I, You are the One who brings forward and leaves behind. There is none worthy of worship save You.16

Here he (ﷺ) commenced with supplication and ended with the testification of tawhid, this because it is legislated to supplicate at the end of the prayer, so he ended with the testification [rather than started with it]. In other cases [such as the previous one], this was not the intent in which case commencing with tawhid is the better course.

15 at-Tirmidhi [#3433] and Aḥmad [#8818, 10415] on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.

Similar aḥādīth are reported on the authority of Sā‘īb by Aḥmad [#15729]; ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Amr and Abū Barza by Abū Dāwūd [#4858, 4859]; ‘A’ishah and Jubayr by an-Nasā’ī [3/71-72]; Anas by al-Bazzār [#3123]; Rāfi’ by an-Nasā’ī, ‘Amal [#427]; ibn Mas‘ūd by at-Ṭabarānī [#4445]; and Zubayr by at-Ṭabarānī, “as-Saghīr” [#970].

It was declared sahīh by ibn Ḥibbān [#594], al-Ḥakīm [#1969-1971], adh-Dhahabi, and al-Albānī, Sahīh at-Targhib [#1516].

16 Muslim [#771] and Abū Dāwūd [#760, 761]
The type of supplication which comprises praise is better than that type of supplication that comprises request and asking, however in some specific circumstances it could be that the latter is better than the former due to some external factor. Similarly prayer is better than recitation, recitation is better than remembrance (dhikr), and remembrance is better than the supplication of request, yet despite this there could be circumstances, times or places, in which the latter are better than former. The beginning of this religion, its end, its outer, and its inner is all tawhid, and making ones religion sincerely for the sake of Allah alone is the actualisation of ‘None has the right to be worshipped save Allah’.

The Correct understanding of Tawhid

The Muslims, even though all of them testify to it, differ greatly in their actualisation of it. Some think that tawhid is merely to believe that Allah is the creator of everything and its Lord17 and hence end up not differentiating between that aspect of tawhid which even the polytheists affirmed and the tawhid which the Messengers called to, the tawhid of singling out Allah alone for worship;18 they do not combine between tawhid of belief and tawhid of deed.

The polytheists never said that the creation was created by two gods, nor that there was a god alongside Allah who created any aspect of it, instead they would say as Allah informed us about them,

\[\text{وَلَيْنَ سَأَلُّهُمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ لِيُفْسَدُونَ لِلَّهِ} \]

17 i.e. they only affirm Tawhid ar-Rubūbiyyah.

18 i.e. Tawhid al-Ilahiyyah or Tawhid al-`Ibadah
"If you asked them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' They would say, 'Allâh'"

[Luqman (31): 25]

"Most of them do not have faith in Allâh without associating others with Him"

[Yûsuf (12): 106]

"Say, 'To whom does the earth belong and everyone in it, if you have any knowledge?' They will say, 'To Allâh.' Say, 'Will you not then take heed?' Say, 'Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Mighty Throne?' They will say, 'Allâh.' Say, 'Will you not then fear Him?' Say, 'In whose hand is the dominion over everything, He who gives protection and from whom no protection can be given, if you have any knowledge?' They will say, 'Allâh's.' Say, 'So how have you been bewitched'"

[al-Mu'minûn (23): 84-89]

Yet despite their belief that Allâh alone was the creator, they set up gods alongside Him, deities they appointed as intercessors between them and Him saying, 'We only worship them that they may draw us closer to Allâh' and they would love them as they should have loved Allâh. Committing *shirk* in ones love, worship,
supplication, and request\textsuperscript{19} is something separate from committing \textit{shirk} in belief and affirmation [of the existence of Allah], as He, Exalted is He, says,

\begin{quote}
\textit{الناس من يعبدون من دون اللط أداؤهم كعبادة لله}
\begin{equation}
\text{وآلِينَ ساعناً أتَمانَ حبَّ اللَّهِ}
\end{equation}
\end{quote}

"Some people set up equals with Allah, loving them as they should love Allah. But those who have faith have greater love for Allah"

\textit{[al-Baqarah (2): 165]}

So whoever loves any object of creation as he should love Allah, has committed \textit{shirk} and has taken partners besides Allah, loving them as he should love Allah, even if he believes that Allah is the sole creator. This is the reason why Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) differentiated between one who loves an object of creation for the sake of Allah and one who loves an object of creation alongside Allah. The first person appoints Allah alone as his object of worship and absolute love and loves no other alongside Him; but when he comes to know that Allah loves His Prophets and righteous servants, he too loves them for this reason; similarly when he comes to know that Allah loves the performance of the legislated and the abandonment of the prohibited, he too loves this. Therefore his love for these matters is an offshoot of his love for Allah, arising by virtue of it and therefore part of his love for Allah.\textsuperscript{20} This is totally the opposite to the one who sets up partners

\textsuperscript{19} i.e. \textit{shirk} in deeds

\textsuperscript{20} The author, \textit{Majmu` Fat\'awâ} [10/48-49] says, 'Loving Allah and His Messenger is from the greatest obligations of faith and the greatest of its foundations, indeed it is the source of every action of faith and religion just as belief is the
besides Allāh, placing his hope and fear in them21, or obeys them without knowing that obeying them is to obey Allāh, or takes them as intercessors without knowing that Allāh has granted permission for this. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

وَقَبَلُوا مَنْ دُرِّبَ عَنْهُمْ مَالَ أَباَمَهُمْ وَلَبَسُعُهُمْ وَفَتَولُوا فَهْنَا شَفَعَٰتُنَا

"They worship, instead of Allāh, what can neither harm them nor help them, saying, 'These are our intercessors with Allāh’"

[Yūnus (10): 18]

= source of every statement of faith and religion. Every single motion arises as a result of love, be it praiseworthy or blameworthy. Therefore all actions of faith and religion arise only as a result of praiseworthy love, the foundation of which is the love of Allāh, Exalted is He. Allāh does not accept any action that is not done seeking His face and therefore any action that arises as a result of blameworthy love is not righteous in the Sight of Allāh.’

21 The author, Majmū’ Futawā [10/61] says, ‘Now if love is the foundation of every religious action, hope and fear then arise as a consequence of it and furthermore lead to it. Every person who hopes in something does so because he loves it, every person who fears something runs from the object of fear in order to attain something beloved.’
they were commanded to worship only one God; there is none worthy of worship save Him! Glory be to Him above anything they associate with Him!"

[at-Tawbah (9): 31]

‘Adī bin Hātim said to Prophet (ﷺ), ‘But they never worshipped them’ to which he replied, They made the unlawful lawful for them and they obeyed them. That was their worship of them.22

Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

اَمِنَ الْهُدْيِ السُّرِّيْرِ ۚ وَلَيْسَ مَن تَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ مِن الْذَّبَّارِينَ

“Or do they have partners who have laid down a religion for them for which Allāh has not given any authority?”

[ash-Shūrā (42): 21]

22 at-Tirmidhī [#3095] and at-Tabarānī, al-Kabīr [#218, 219].

At-Tirmidhī said that it was gharīb and it was declared ḥasan by al-Albānī, Sahih at-Tirmidhī [#2471].

The author said in explanation to this hadith, ‘These people are of two types: The First: Those who know that their leaders have altered the religion and they follow them in their alteration, therefore they believe in the lawfulness of what Allāh has made unlawful and the unlawfulness of what Allāh has made lawful, following thereby these leaders of theirs while knowing that they are opposing the religion of the Messengers. This is disbelief and Allāh and His Messenger have declared it to be shirk...The Second: They still have the belief in the lawfulness of what Allāh made lawful and the unlawfulness of what Allāh made unlawful, but they followed them in disobeying Allāh, in the same way that the Muslim may commit a sin while knowing it to be so. These people have the same ruling as the sinners and the Prophet (ﷺ) said, ‘Obedience is only in the good’”—Āli ash-Shaykh [p. 91]
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“The Day when a wrongdoer will bite his hands and say, ‘Alas for me! If only I had gone the way of the Messenger! Alas for me! If only I had not taken so-and-so for a friend! He led me astray from the Reminder after it came to me.’ Satan always leaves man in the lurch!”

[al-Furqan (25): 27-29]

al-Rububiyyah and al-Ilahiyyah

The point of this discussion is to show the state of a servant, whose servitude is only for Allāh, who worships Him and asks Him for help and therefore lives His saying,

إِياَكَ نُبِينَ وَإِيَّاكَ نَمَسِعُ

“You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help”

[al-Fatihah (1): 5]

who lives and actualises Tawhid ar-Ilahiyyah and Tawhid ar-Rububiyyah. Now, even though al-Ilahiyyah includes ar-Rububiyyah and ar-Rububiyyah necessitates al-Ilahiyyah,23 when mentioned together they take on their specific meanings, as in His sayings,

23 The belief that Allāh is the creator, nourisher, sustainer—the Lord—necessarily leads one to realise that He alone should be worshipped, hence Rububiyyah leads to Ilahiyyah. The fact that one worships Allāh alone and nothing else is because he has come to believe that only Allāh is the creator, sustainer etc., hence Ilahiyyah includes Rububiyyah.
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وَقَالَ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْكَاتِبِ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ 

"Say, 'I take refuge with the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind...'

[an-Nās (114): 1-3]

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

"All praise and thanks are due for Allāh the Lord of the worlds"

[al-Fātihah (1): 2]

dtherby mentioning the name Allāh and Lord, for Allāh is the One who is worshipped and deserves to be worshipped and the Lord is the One who regulates the affairs of His servants and sustains them. This is why worship is linked to the name Allāh and asking linked to the name, Lord; this is because worship is the goal for which creation was created and hence Īlāhiyyah is the objective, Rubūbiyyah comprises within it the creation of the creation and hence deals with their point of commencement.\(^{24}\)

\(^{24}\) As-Saʿdi, Tafsir says, 'The Lord is the One Who nourishes and sustains the whole of the Creation, meaning everything besides Allāh, by the very fact of His creating them, His preparing for them all that they need and His favouring them with great blessings which if removed would also remove any possibility of the creation surviving. Therefore every blessing they possess is from Him, Exalted is He. His sustaining His creation is of two types: General and Specific. As for the general then it is His creating the Creation, granting them provisions and guiding them to that which would benefit them in order to have them survive in this world. As for the specific then it is His sustaining His friends with faith and making them conform to it, perfecting and completing it for them, repressing all that would make them turn away from it, bridling any hindering factors that may be set up between them and Him, and safe-guarding them from all evil. It is possible that the reason behind the fact that most of the supplications made by the Prophets employed the word 'Lord' was due to it carrying this meaning, for all of the things they desired through their supplications fell under His Specific Lordship.'
the one praying says,

إِبَّالِيُّ وَإِبَّالِيُّ نُؤْبِيُّ

“You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help”

[al-Fātiḥah (1): 5]

he begins by mentioning the objective and then mentions the means to this which is the point of commencement—worship is the objective and asking for help is the means to attaining it. Because worship is linked to the name, Allāh, the legislated phrases of remembrance contain this Name, ‘Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar’ for the call to prayer; ‘I testify that none has the right to be worshipped save Allāh’ for the testification to Islām; ‘All pure and good works are for Allāh’ in the tashahhud; and ‘Subhān Allāh, al-Hamdu’llāh, Lā ilāha ill Allāh, Allāhu Akbar.’

As for request, frequently do we find that it is done with the name, Lord,

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا افْتَغَسِّئَ وَأَنَّ أَثْمَرْنَا وَأَخْطَأْنَا لَوْلَا تَعَفَّفْنَا نَكَوْنُ أَنَّكَ نَزِيِّمُونَ

‘[They said:] ‘Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost’”

[al-A‘rāf (7): 23]

قَالَ رَبِّي إِنَّى أُعُوُذُكَ مِن أَسْتَؤْلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمُ

‘[He said:] ‘My Lord! I take refuge with You from asking You for anything about which I have no knowledge...’”

[Hūd (11): 47]

قَالَ رَبِّي إِنَّى ظَلَّتُ تَفَشُّى فَأَغْفِرْلِي

‘[He prayed:] ‘My Lord! I have wronged myself so forgive me’”
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[al-Qasas (28): 16]

\[
\text{زَيَّنَّاهُ إِلَيْنِيُّ أَسْكَطْتُ مُنْ ذِرَّتِي بِوَادِ عَرْبَةِ ذَيَّ رَبِّي اِبْنِ ذَيَّ بَيْكَ}
\text{الْمَهْرُمِ رَبِّي اِبْنِي يُمْسِكُ وَالْصُّمْوَةُ}
\]

“...[Ibrahim prayed;] 'Our Lord! I have settled my offspring by Your Sacred House in an uncultivated valley. Our Lord! Let them establish the prayer...’”

[Ibrahim (14): 37]

\[
\text{وَإِذْ رَجَعَ إِلَيْهِ القَوْلَاءَ مِنْ آيَةَ اللَّهِ وَإِسْكَيْلَ رَبَّاهُ}
\text{يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْمُتَّقِينَ}
\]

“...[He prayed;] 'Our Lord! Accept this from us! You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing...’”

[al-Baqarah (2): 127]

\[
\text{رَبِّنَا اِنَّكَ فِي الْدُّنْيَا}
\text{حَسَنَةٌ وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةٌ وَرَضِيَ عَنَّاهُ الْأَطْرَارُ}
\]

“‘Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire’”

[al-Baqarah (2): 201]

It is reported that Mālik said, ‘I dislike that a person say while supplicating, “O My Master! O My Master! O Hannān! O Hannān!” Rather he should supplicate as the Prophets supplicated, “Our Lord! Our Lord!”’ Recorded by al-‘Utbī, al-‘Utbiyyah. Allāh, Exalted is He, says concerning those bestowed depth of understanding,
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“...those who remember Allah standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: ‘Our Lord! You have not created this for nothing. Glory be to You! Safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire...’”


So when a servant wishes to ask, it is befitting that he ask employing the name, ‘Lord’, however were he to employ the name, ‘Allâh’ because this name includes within its boundaries the name, ‘Lord’, this is good. When a servant wishes to worship, the name ‘Allâh’ is more befitting to be used. When one begins by praising Allâh, he should mention the name, ‘Allâh’ and when he wishes to supplicate, he should mention the name, ‘Lord’; this is why Yûnus said,

لا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَّكَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِلَيْكَ صَلَّيۡتُ عَلَيْكَ التَّحمِيمۡيِّنَ

“[Yûnus prayed:] ‘None has the right to be worshipped save You; glory be to You, far removed are You from any imperfection; I have been amongst the wrong-doers.’”

[al-Anbiya’ (21): 87]

while Ādam said,

فَأَنَزَلَنَا عَلَيْنَا خَطِيَائِنَا وَأَنتَ عَلَيْنَا شَقِيٌّ وَعَاسِمُ الْجَنَّةِ

“Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost.”

[al-A’râf (7): 23]

This is because Yûnus (‘alayhis-salâm) left in a state of exasperation and Allâh, Exalted is He says,
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“So wait steadfastly for the judgment of your Lord and do not be like the Companion of the Fish”

\[al-Qalam\ (68): 48\]

“Then the fish devoured him and he was to blame”

\[as-Saffât (37): 142\]

hence he committed that which he could be reprimanded for, therefore it was befitting for him to begin by praising his Lord and to acknowledge that none deserves to be worshipped save Him, implying that ones desires should not be submitted to for in doing so leads to the weakening of worshipping Allâh alone. It is reported that Yûnûs (‘alayhis-salam) felt remorse at the punishment being lifted from his people after he had threatened them with it, he feared that they would accuse him of lying and hence left them in a state of exasperation. It was because of this that he said,

\[lā lâlîhâ ala âdān\]

“There is none worthy of worship save You...”

\[al-Anbiyâ’ (21): 87\]

these words absolve any besides Allâh of godship, be it by way of submitting to the desires of the soul or obeying an object of creation, this is why he went on to say,

\[sânâbûn kāna aî sâhîh mîn al-târîkh\]

“...glory be to You, far removed are You from any imperfection; I have been amongst the wrong-doers”

\[al-Anbiyâ’ (21): 87\]
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the servant says these words on occasions when he assumes something to be other than what it is or desires something that is not good. As for Ādam, he first confessed his sin by saying,

\[
\text{قَالَ رَبِّنَا أَنْفَسْنا وَأَنْفَسَتَ بُنيَاتُنَا وَأَنْفَسَتِنَا الْكَعْبَةَ مِنَ الْخَيْبَةِ}
\]

“Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost”

[al-Ă‘rāf (7): 23]

due to their negligence, not due to their submitting to their base

there was no one with Ādam who was competing with godship who would take from him the desire to do what Allāh ordered, rather he thought that Satan spoke the truth when he said,

\[
\text{فَقَامَ مَعَهُمْ إِلَيْهِ ابْنُكُمْ لِلْحَيَةِ الْأَخِرَةِ وَلِلْحُكْمِ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمَا إِلَّا كَذَبُوهُ}
\]

“He swore to them, ‘I am one of those who give good advice.’ So he enticed them to do it by means of trickery”

[al-Ă‘rāf (7): 21-22]

Satan deceived them and made out that he was a sincere advisor to them, therefore when they accepted this from him, it befitted their condition to say,

\[
\text{قَالَ رَبِّنَا أَنْفَسْنا وَأَنْفَسَتَ بُنيَاتُنَا وَأَنْفَسَتِنَا الْكَعْبَةَ مِنَ الْخَيْبَةِ}
\]

“Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost”

[al-Ă‘rāf (7): 23]
desire or in pursuit of some temporal benefit that would contend with godship; these two were in need of having their knowledge and intent perfected; hence they confessed their need of their Lord besides whom none could fulfil their need.

So Dhū-n-Nūn confessed his negligence in fulfilling the duties of *Ilāhiyyah* by virtue of his leaving his people in a state of exasperation, in a state where he disliked the fact that his people were saved, hence desiring something that contended with his love of Allāh. When the servant says, ‘None has the right to be worshipped save You’ he is clearing his heart of worshipping his desires. It is reported, There is no god worshipped under the expanse of the heaven which is more severe in the sight of Allāh then desires that are submitted to.25

Therefore Yūnus (‘alayhis-salām) perfected his *Ilāhiyyah* of Allāh and removed any intent to follow his desires, hence there was nothing left in his heart that would contend with the *Ilāhiyyah* of the Truth, indeed he was from amongst those who made the religion sincerely for Allāh, being one of the greatest chosen servants of Allāh.

It is possible that the likes of this situation occur to someone and after its passing, there remain in him some type of exasperation, anger to the decree, or some evil whispers concerning His wisdom and mercy. In this case the servant stands in need of absolving himself of two matters: corrupt intent and corrupt desires. He should know that wisdom and justice lies in what was decreed for

25 At-Ṭabarānī [#7502] and ibn Abī ‘Āṣim [#3] on the authority of Abū Umāmah.

It is *mawdū‘* as ruled by ibn al-Jawzī and endorsed by adh-Dhahabī, *Tartib al-Mawdū‘āt* [#956] and al-Albānī; al-Haythamī [1/188] said that its isnād contains a matrūk narrator.
him, not in what he thinks should have happened, hence his desires should be compliant to the order of Allāh such that he ends in a state that feels no opposition to His order,

"No, by your Lord, they are not believers until they make you their judge in the disputes that break out between them, and then find no resistance within themselves to what you decide and submit themselves completely"

[an-Nisā' (4): 65]

It is reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, By the One in whose hand is my soul, none of you believes until his very desire conforms to what I have brought. Reported by Abū Ḥātim in his Ṣaḥīḥ.26

In the Ṣaḥīḥ it is recorded that ‘Umar said, ‘O Messenger of Allāh! By Allāh you are more beloved to me than myself’ to which he (ﷺ) said, Now O ‘Umar!27

In the Ṣaḥīḥ it is recorded that he (ﷺ) said, None of you believes until I am more beloved to him than his father, son and the whole of mankind.28

Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

26 Ibn Abī ‘Āsim [#15] and ad-Daylamlî [#7960] with a ḍaʿīf isnād as ruled by ibn Rajab, Jāmiʿ [#41].

27 Bukhārī [#3694, 6264, 6632] and Abū Dāwūd [#2942]

28 Bukhārī [#15] and Muslim [#44]
“Say, ‘If your fathers, or your sons, or your brothers, or your wives, or your tribe, or any wealth you have acquired, or any business you fear may slump, or any house which pleases you, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving hard in His Cause, then wait until Allah brings about His command...’”

[at-Tawbah (9): 24]

So if Īmān is not attained except through the servant taking the Messenger (ṣalallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) as judge and fully accepting his judgment, that his desire comply to what he has brought, that the Messenger and striving hard in His Cause take precedence over the love he has for himself, his property and family, what then would one say with respect to Allah?!

Therefore whoever sees a people who he thinks deserve to be punished, but Allāh forgives them and shows mercy to them, and he finds a dislike for this, this is due to one of two reasons: his desire opposes the order of Allāh or his presumption opposes the knowledge of Allāh and Allāh is All-Knowing, All-Wise. When you truly come to know that He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, all causes for dislike dissolve and disappear. As for those matters that He has ordered us to dislike such as disbelief, sin, and transgression; we are required to obey Him in this. But these matters
are not like his lifting the punishment from a people for this is an action of His that we cannot dislike; instead we are required to like it. For a person to dislike such matters is to follow a desire that contends with Ilahiyyah, in such a case the servant must complete his tawhid by saying, ‘None has the right to be worshipped save You.’ It is upon us to love what He loves, to be content with what He is pleased with, to order what He orders, and prohibit what He prohibits. So for example if He loves those who repent and those who purify themselves, it is upon us to love them as well.

**Repentance**

The ḥadith of repentance is established in the Ṣaḥīḥ, Allāh shows more joy at the repentance of His servant than a man who encamps at a dangerous place, with him is his riding beast carrying his food and drink. He rests his head and falls asleep for a short while and awakes to find his animal missing, [he searches for it] until he is very thirsty and hungry and decides to go back to his place where he once again falls asleep. When he awakes the second time he finds his animal standing besides him.29

Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

إِنَّا لِلَّه َوَنَحْنُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“Allāh loves those who turn in repentance and loves those who purify themselves”

*[al-Baqarah (2): 222]*

فَأُولْئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَهْجُرُونَ لِلَّهِ َوَيَقْسَمُونَ عَلَى صِبْرٍ

29 Bukhārī [#6309] and Muslim [#2747]
“...except for those who turn in repentance and have faith and work righteous deeds, Allah will transfer the wrong actions of such people into good—Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful”

*al-Furqān (25): 70*

There is a hadith in the Ṣaḥīḥ which mentions that Allah would present the minor sins of a person to him on the Day of Judgment and withhold the major sins, and he would admit to them, all the while fearing that his major sins were soon to be presented, upon which Allah would say, “I have forgiven you and altered every evil deed to a good deed.” He will say, ‘But my Lord! I have committed sins that I have not yet been seen!’

meaning that when he saw his bad deeds being altered, he then wished to see his major sins, which he was previously in fear of, so that they too could be altered to good deeds. It is known that his state after this alteration is much greater than the state he would have been in had he not committed the sins and had there been no alteration.

A group of the Salaf, amongst whom was Sa’id bin Jubair, said, ‘A servant could perform a good deed and enter Hell on account of it, and a servant could commit a sin and enter Paradise on account of it. The first performed the good deed and became boastful and exultant to such an extent that he entered Hell, the second committed the sin and remained in fear of it and persisted in asking for forgiveness until he entered Paradise.’ Allah, Exalted is He, says,

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30 Muslim [#190] and at-Tirmidhi [#2596]
The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness

[Al-Ahzab (33): 72-73]

"We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains but they refused to take it on and shrank from it. But man took it on, he is indeed wrongdoing and ignorant. This was so that Allâh might punish the men and women of the hypocrites and the men and women of the polytheists, and turn towards the men and women of the believers. Allâh is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful"

The objective of every person is to be amongst those believers, male and female, whom Allâh has forgiven.

This opinion is proven by countless texts from the Book, the authentic Sunnah and the Books that were revealed before the Qur'ân. Those who reject this opinion interpret these texts with interpretations that resemble those of the Jahmiyyah, Qadariyyah and Dahriyyah to the texts concerning the Names and Attributes of Allâh, the texts concerning the decree, and the texts concerning the resurrection. They are of the same nature as the

31 i.e. that Prophets can commit sins.

32 An early sect that denied the Names and Attributes of Allâh, followers of Jahm bin Safwân.
interpretations of the Qarāmiṭā\textsuperscript{35}, known by necessity to be false. They amount to distorting words from their correct context, it is even possible that some of those who do this, even though they intend to honour and exalt the Prophets, fall into denial or disbelief of them.

Moreover, the infallibility which is proven by the texts of the Legal Law, the intellect, and consensus, is their infallibility in conveying the message. This is of no benefit to them as they do not accept the meanings of what the Prophets conveyed, instead they distort the texts or they end up being like the illiterate who know nothing of the Book except their own assumptions.

Allāh, Exalted is He, frequently mentions the repentance of the Prophets and their asking forgiveness. Ādām and his wife said,

\begin{quote}
فَآذِنُنَا إِنَّا نَأْتُونَكَ هَدًىٰ مَنْ كَانَ أَتَّلِمَهُ وَتَعُوَّبَهُ نَعَمَّنَّا

"Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost"

\textit{[al-\textit{A'raf} (7): 23]}\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{33} An early sect that denied \textit{qadr}, or divine decree, stating instead the man has a complete free will.

\textsuperscript{34} A sect that denied the reality of the Resurrection, Judgment, Paradise, and Hell.

\textsuperscript{35} A sect, branching off from the Shi'a, that based itself around esoteric exegesis of the Qur'ān and Ahādīth, stating that texts commanding prayer and zakāt etc. were all merely metaphors.
Nūh said,

"My Lord! I take refuge with You from asking You for anything about which I have no knowledge. If You do not forgive me and have mercy on me, I will be among the lost"

[Hūd (11): 47]

al-Khalīl said,

"Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day the Reckoning takes place"

[Ibrāhīm (14): 41]

"...He who I sincerely hope will forgive my mistakes on the Day of Reckoning"

[ash-Su‘ārā’ (26): 82]

Mūsā said,

"...You are our protector so forgive us and have mercy on us. You are the Best of Forgivers. Prescribe for us good in this world and the Hereafter, we have truly turned to You"

[al-A‘rāf (7): 155-156]
THE GREATEST INVOCATION FOR FORGIVENESS

“My Lord! I have wronged myself so forgive me...”

[al-Qasas (28): 16]

“When he regained consciousness he said, ‘Glory be to You! I turn to you in repentance and I am the first of the believers’”

[al-A’raf (7): 143]

Allāh, Exalted is He, informs us of Dāwūd that he,

“Begged forgiveness from his Lord and fell down prone, prostrating, and repented”

[Sād (38): 24-25]

Sulaymān said,

“My Lord! Forgive me and give me a kingdom the like of which will never be granted to anyone after me. Truly You are the Ever-Giving”

[Sād (38): 35]

As for Yūsuf, the sincerely truthful, Allāh did not mention any sin of his, and this is why no mention is made of repentance from him, instead He said,
The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness

“So He informed us that he turned evil and indecency away from him and this proves that he committed neither. As for His saying,

“She wanted him and he would have wanted her had he not seen the Clear Proof of his Lord”

[Yūsuf (12): 24]

The word ‘desire’ (hamm) is a generic noun (ism jins) and it falls into two categories as Imām Aḥmad said, ‘Desire is of two types: a desire that is merely thoughts, and a desire that one commits and persists in.’ It is established in the Šāḥih that the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, ‘When a servant desires to commit a sin, nothing is recorded against him, if he then leaves that sin for the sake of Allāh, one good deed is recorded for him, if he commits that sin, one sin is recorded for him, if he leaves that sin, but not for the sake of Allāh, no sin or reward is recorded for him.’

So Yūsuf (‘alayhis-salām) had a desire which he abandoned for the sake of Allāh and this is why Allāh turned him away from evil and indecency by virtue of his sincerity. Hence, this ‘turning away’ occurs when the cause for committing sin is present, i.e. desire, yet contending with this is one’s sincerity to Allāh. So Yūsuf

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36 The author, may Allāh have mercy upon him, has quoted the hadith in meaning. It is recorded by Bukhārī [#7501] and Muslim [#128-130]
As for His saying,

وَقَالَ الْمَلَّٰکُ ۛ أَنْ تَوِّهِبَ ٱلْخَلَّٰلَةْ

"I do not say that my self was free from blame, the self indeed commands to evil acts—except for those my Lord has mercy on"

[Yūsuf (12): 53]

these are the words of the wife of al-'Azīz as is clearly proven by the Qur’ān,
"The king said, ‘Bring him to me straight away!’ But when the envoy came to him, he said, ‘Go back to your master and enquire of him what happened about the women who cut their hands. My Lord has knowledge of their cunning guile.’ He said, ‘What was this past affair of yours when you solicited Yūsuf?’ Then they said, ‘Allāh forbid! We know no bad of him.’ The governor’s wife then said, ‘The truth has now emerged. Indeed I tried to seduce him then and he has simply told the honest truth. In this way he may know at last that I did not dishonour him behind his back and that Allāh most surely does not guide the deviousness of the dishonourable. I do not say that my self was free from blame, the self indeed commands to evil acts—except for those my Lord has mercy on’"

[Yūsuf (12): 50-53]

All of these are the words of the wife, for Yūsuf was still in prison at that time not yet having had an audience with the king, but in his absence his innocence was finally established upon
which the king said,

وَقَالَ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ الْكَيْبَرُ

“...‘Bring him to me straight away so I may draw him very close to me.’ When he spoke to him, he declared, ‘Today you are trusted, established in our sight’”

[Yūsuf (12): 54]

Many exegetes mentioned these words\textsuperscript{37} to be the words of Yūsuf, and some of them only mentioned this opinion. This opinion is totally false and has no evidence to support it, indeed the evidences prove the opposite. These matters have been detailed in other places.

The point of this discussion is to show that all that is contained in the story of Dhū-n-Nūn for which he could be censured for, is all forgiven, and furthermore, Allāh altered it all to good deeds and raised his ranks. He was in a much better state after coming out of the belly of the whale and his repentance than he was before. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

قدْرَنَّكُمْ ولَا تَخْفُو، وَلَا تَفْرَكُوا، كَيْبَرْ بِالْقُلُوبِ، أَنْ تَذْكَرُوا مَنْ أَنْصَرَكُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ، وَهُوَ مَلِكُ الْكُلّ، ۚ فَعَلَّمُواٰ الأَمْسِيَّةَ

“So wait steadfastly for the judgment of your Lord and do not be like the Companion of the Fish when he called out in absolute despair. Had a blessing from his

\textsuperscript{37} i.e. the words of [Yūsuf: 53], “I do not say that my self was to blame...”
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Lord not overtaken him, he would have been thrown up on the naked shore, for he was at fault. But his Lord chose him and made him one of the righteous”

[al-Qalam (68): 48-50]

This was different to his state when he was in the belly of the whale,

فَأَلَّمَّاهُ الْخَلْقُ وَهُوَ مَّعَهُ

“Then the fish devoured him and he was to blame”

[al-Saffat (37): 142]

So in this state he was blamed, but he was not in this state when taken out of the belly of the whale, hence his condition after saying,

لا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سَبِيلُنَا إِنِّي سَمِعْتُ مِنَ الْقَلِيدِينَ

“None has the right to be worshipped save You; glory be to You, far removed are You from any imperfection; I have been amongst the wrong-doers”

[al-Anbiya’ (21): 87]

was better than his state before. What is taken into consideration is the perfection of the end state, not what may have occurred in the beginning. Actions are by their conclusions.

Allāh loves those who repent

As regards what is mentioned in some of the Judeao-Christian reports that, ‘Allāh said to Dāwūd, ‘As for your sin, I have forgiven it, but as for love, this will never return.’ Even if this were authentic, it cannot be considered to be legislation for us for the religion of Muḥammad (ﷺ) comes with a repentance that was not meted out to those who came before us, it was for this reason that he said, I
am the Prophet of mercy and I am the Prophet of repentance.38

Through him, Allah lifted many of the difficulties and constraints placed on those who came before us. Allah, Exalted is He, said in His Book,

إن الله يحب التوبةين ويتوب على من طمعه

“Allah loves those who turn in repentance and loves those who purify themselves”

[al-Baqarah (2): 222]

He informs us that He shows more joy at the repentance of His servant than one who finds something he has lost that he had dire need of.39 So if this is the joy and love that Allah displays at repentance, how can it be said that His love will not return?

38 at-Tirmidhi, ash-Shama’il [#369] and Ahīmad [#23443, 23445] on the authority of Hudhayfah. Similar hadith are recorded on the authority of Jubayr by Bukhārī and Muslim; and Abū Mūsā by Ahīmad [#19525, 19621, 19651] It was declared saḥīḥ by ibn Hibbān [#6315]; as-Suyūṭī [#2701] and al-Albānī, Sahīh al-Jāmi’ [#1473]

39 The author, al-Istīghfār [p. 66] says, “This is why it is said that repentance is a station that accompanies the servant throughout his entire life, and everyone is in need of it. The whole of creation must repent and repent continuously. Allāh, Exalted is He, says: “Indeed We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed he was unjust and ignorant. It was so that Allah may punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the polytheists, men and women, and that Allah may accept repentance from the believers, men and women.” [al-Abtāb (33): 72-73]

The objective and fulfilment of every believer is repentance. Allāh, Exalted is He, says to the best of the Prophets (ﷺ) and to the best of creation after the Prophets, “Allāh has already forgiven the Prophet and the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār who followed in the hour of difficulty…” [at-Tawbah (9): 117]
The Greatest Invocation for Forgiveness

“He is the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Loving, the Possessor of the Throne, the All-Glorious, the Doer of whatever He desires”

[al-Buruj (85): 14-16]

His love is in proportion to the efforts that the servant undertakes in trying to draw closer to Allāh after having repented. If the servant strives more after his repentance, the love that Allāh bestows him will be greater than what was bestowed him before, the opposite is also true; the recompense is of the same type as the action,

"Your Lord does not wrong His servants"

[Fussilat (41): 46]

The Šāhiḥ records that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, Allāh says, ‘Whosoever has mutual animosity with a friend (wali) of Mine then I declare war on him. My servant does not draw close to Me with anything as he does by carrying out what I have made obligatory upon him. My servant continues to draw near to Me by performing optional deeds such that I love him. And when I love him, I am his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his leg with which he walks. Were he to ask of Me, I would surely give him and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant it to him. I am never so hesitant to do something as I am to take the soul of my believing servant, he dislikes death and I dislike to harm him but he must die.”

It is known that the best of the Awliya’ after the Prophets are the Forerunners amongst the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār. The love

40 Bukhārī [#6502] and ibn Ḥībān [#347]
that our Lord bestowed them after their having repented and accepted Islām was from the greatest of loves and each time they drew closer to Him through performing optional deeds, after having performed the obligatory deeds, this love increased. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

"It may well be that Allāh will restore the love between you and those of them who are now your enemies. Allāh is All-Powerful. Allāh is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful"

[al-Mumtahina (60): 7]

This verse was revealed with regards the polytheists who opposed Allāh and His Messenger such as people amongst the Confederates like Abū Sufyān bin Harb41, Abū Sufyān bin al-Hārith, al-Hārith bin Hishām, Suhail bin ‘Amr, ‘Ikrimah bin Abū Jahl, Sufwān bin Umayyah and others. All of these were people who, after hating Allāh and His Messenger, came to love them in varying degrees, some more than others. It is established in the Šāhīh that Umm Mu‘āwiyyah, Hind, the wife of Abū Sufyān, said, ‘O Messenger of Allāh! By Allāh there was no family on the face of this earth that I wished to have disgraced more than yours, but today there is no family that I wish to be honoured more than yours. And the Messenger said something similar.42

It is known that the love one believer feels for another follows on from their love of Allāh, Exalted is He. The most trustworthy and firm handholds of faith are to love for the sake of Allāh and

41 as-Suyūṭi, ad-Durr al-Manṭub [6/205]

42 Bukhārī [#6641, 3825]
to hate for the sake of Allah. Loving for the sake of Allah is from the perfection of *tawhid* and and loving others alongside Allah is shirk. Allah, Exalted is He, says,

وَمَنْ يَحْبُبْ أَنْ يُحْبِبَ اللَّهَ فَلَهُ الْحَبَّ اِلْبَالِغُ وَلَهُ الْحَبَّ الْمَكْرُورُ

“Some people set up equals with Allah, loving them as they should love Allah. But those who have faith have greater love for Allah”

\[al-Baqarah (2): 165\]

The love that occurred between the Messenger and the believers and those who had previously opposed them was a love that was for the sake of Allah. Whoever loves Allah, Allah loves him, hence it is known that Allah loved them after their repentance just as they loved Him. How then can it be said, ‘The penitent only attains forgiveness but not love’?

Now if someone were to contend with this by saying, ‘But those people used to be disbelievers, not knowing that what they previously did was prohibited, but these [Muslims] know what they do is prohibited but still do it!’ The response to this is from two angles:

*The first:* This is not the case, many of the disbelievers know that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah yet oppose him because of jealousy and arrogance. Abū Sufyān had previously already heard

\[The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, ‘The most trustworthy and firm handhold of faith is loving for the sake of Allah and hating for the sake Allah.’ Recorded by ibn Abī Shaybah [#34338], Aḥmad [4/286] and it is *ṣaḥīḥ* as per al-Albānī [#1728].\]
about the Prophet from people such as Umayyah bin Abū as-Salt and Heracles. Not only this but he also informed us that he was always convinced that the Prophet would be victorious, yet still would he oppose him until Allāh caused him to enter Islām, albeit unwillingly. However, after his enmity, many events in his life after this, such as what occurred in the Year of al-Yarmuk, show the excellence of his Islām and his love of Allāh and His Messenger. Allāh, Exalted is He says,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{"...those who do not call on any other god alongside Allāh and do not kill anyone Allāh has made inviolate, except with the right to do so, and do not fornicate; anyone who does that will receive an evil punishment and on the Day of Resurrection his punishment will be doubled and he will be humiliated in it timelessly, forever; except for those who repent, have faith and work righteous deeds: Allāh will transform the wrong actions of such people into good"
}
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{[al-Furqān (25): 68-70]}\]

Allāh alters their bad deeds for good deeds and good deeds lead to Allāh loving them. This alteration is not only for disbelievers who have accepted Islām for Allāh says,
Abū al-‘Āliyah said, ‘I asked the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) about this verse and they replied that whoever disobeys Allāh is ignorant and whoever repents to Allāh before his death has repented quickly.\(^4\)

The second: This distinction between the two types of penitent people is a distinction that has no proof in the Book or Sunnah, instead they prove that Allāh loves the penitent and shows joy at their repentance, whether they knew what they were doing was wrong or not.

**True Repentance involves a Person Changing Himself**

Whoever knows that he has committed a sin and then repents, must change himself so that his state becomes praiseworthy: if he previously hated the truth, he must now love it, and if he loved falsehood, he must now hate it. Whatever the servant has of knowing the truth, loving it, and acting by it; hating falsehood and avoiding it, all of these are matters that are beloved to Allāh

\(^4\) At-Ṭabarî [3/640] and as-Suyūṭī [2/130]
and please Him. The love that Allah bestows to His servants is in accordance to what they have of those matters that are beloved to Him. Whoever moves from a state of being detested by the Truth to a state of being beloved to Him, Allah would change his bad deeds for good ones because he changed his state from being blameworthy to being praiseworthy and the reward is of the same type as the action.

So if the penitent person was to conform to what the Truth loves more after his repentance, the Truth would love him more, so how can it be thought that love does not return after repentance?

Through understanding this point one can also answer the doubts raised by those who say that Allah has never commissioned a Prophet except that he was infallible before his being commissioned. This was the position of some of the Rāfidah and others; likewise it answers the doubts raised by those who say that Allah has never commissioned a Prophet except that he was a believer before his being commissioned. These people think that sins are a cause of deficiency even if one has sincerely repented from them, and this is a great error on their part. This is because the censure and punishment that is meted out to the sinner is not shared at all by the penitent who has repented immediately after his sin; it is however possible that if this person delays his repentance than he could have a portion of the retribution meted out to him.

The Prophets, may Allah send peace and blessings upon them, would never delay repentance, rather they would rush to it and compete in doing so. They would never delay and they would never persist in committing a sin, indeed they are preserved from this. Whoever amongst them did delay repentance slightly was tried
by Allāh so as to serve as expiation for the delay as was done with Dhū-n-Nūn, may Allāh’s peace and blessings be upon him. This according to the opinion of those who stated that he was put in the whale of the belly after being commissioned as a Prophet, as is the famous opinion; in the opinion of those who opine that this was before his prophethood, this explanation is not required.

The one who has repented from disbelief and sin could be better than one who has not fallen into disbelief or sin. If it is possible that he be better, the best is more deserving of a Prophet; Allāh informs us of the brothers of Yūsuf and their sins, yet they became the leaders of the tribes and Allāh commissioned them as Prophets. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

\[
 فَأَنَّ اللَّهُ مَسْلُولُ وَقَالَ

إِلَيْ مِهَاجِرٍ إِلَى رَبِّيَ إِنِّي هَوَرَمْتُ لِلْمَكْرِ
\]

“And Lūṭ believed him and said, ‘I am leaving this place to follow the pleasure of my Lord...’”

[al-’Ankabūt (29): 26]

Lūṭ then believed in Ibrāhīm and then Allāh sent Lūṭ to his people. Allāh, Exalted is He, says concerning the story of Shu‘ayb,
"The ruling circle of those of his people who were arrogant said, 'We will drive you out of our city, Shu‘ayb, you and those who have believed along with you, unless you return to our religion.' He said, 'What, even though we detest it? We would be inventing lies against Allah if we returned to your religion after Allah has saved us from it. We could never return to it unless Allah, our Lord, so willed. Our Lord encompasses everything in His knowledge. We have put our trust in Allah, our Lord! Judge between us and our people with truth, You are the best of judges’"

[al-A‘rāf (7): 88-89]

"Those who were disbelievers said to their Messengers, 'We will drive you from our land unless you return to our religion.' Their Lord revealed to them, 'We will destroy those who do wrong and we will leave you in the land to live in after them. That is the reward of those who fear My station and fear My threat’"

[Ibrāhīm (14): 13-14]

So when it becomes known that consideration is given to the perfection of the conclusion and this perfection is only attained through repentance; every servant is in dire need of repentance and it is obligatory upon the first and the last. Allah, Exalted is He, said,
Allāh, Glorious is He, informs us of the repentance of Ādam, Nūh, and those who came after them until the Seal of the Messengers, Muhammad (ﷺ). From amongst the last verses to be revealed to him, or the last verses to be revealed to him, were,

إذَا جَاءَتْ نَفْسُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ ۖ وَزَوَّدْتَ الْكاَتِبَ
بِذَلِكَ دُخُولُكُمْ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَوَّلًا ۖ فَسَمِعْ بِمَعْمَدِكَ
وَأَسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ سَيُنَادِيُّنَّكَ نَوَادِيَتَهُ

"When Allāh’s help and victory have arrived and you have seen the people entering Allāh’s religion in droves, then glorify your Lord’s praises and ask His forgiveness, He is the Ever-Returning”

[an-Nāṣr (110): 1-3]

The Two Ṣaḥiḥs record the ḥadīth of ‘Ā’ishah, may Allāh be pleased with her, that the Prophet (ﷺ) would frequently say in his bowing and prostration,

ْمَسْكُونَكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبِّي وَسَيَخْفَيَ اللَّهُ افْغْيِرَ لِيُ،

Glory be to You, O Allāh, our Lord, far removed are You from any imperfection, all praise and thanks are
due to You. O Allāh! Forgive me.

Thereby implementing the Qur‘ān.\textsuperscript{45}

Before this verse, Allāh revealed,

\begin{verse}
\text{“Allāh has turned towards the Prophet and the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, those who followed him at the time of difficulty, after the hearts of a group of them has almost deviated, then He turned towards them—He is All-Gentle, Most Merciful to them.”}
\end{verse}

\textit{[at-Tawbah (9): 117]}

Bukhārī records the ḥadīth that the Prophet (ﷺ) would say, “O People! Turn to your Lord in repentance, for by the One in whose hand is my soul, I ask Allāh’s forgiveness and turn to him in repentance more than seventy times.”\textsuperscript{46}

Muslim has the ḥadīth on the authority of al-Agharr al-Muẓāni that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “A shadow crosses my heart and I ask Allāh’s forgiveness one hundred times a day.”\textsuperscript{47}

The Sunan have the ḥadīth on the authority of ibn ‘Umar who

\textsuperscript{45} Bukhārī [\#794, 817, 4293, 4967, 4968] and Muslim [\#484]

\textsuperscript{46} Bukhārī [\#6307] and at-Tirmidhī [\#3259]

\textsuperscript{47} Muslim [\#2702] and Abū Dāwūd [\#1515]
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said, We would count the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) saying,

رزْبَ اغْفِرْ لِي وَتَبَّ عَلَيْيَ إِلَّاَّ أَنْتَ الْنَّبِيُّ الْحَفِيظُ

“My Lord! Forgive me and turn to me, You are the Oft-Returning, the Forgiving.”

one hundred times in one sitting.”

The Two Ṣaḥīḥs record the ḥadīth on the authority of Abū Mūsā that the Prophet (ﷺ) would say,

 알ِيْهِما، آمُّرَ لِي خَطْطِيْهِ وَرَجْلِيْهِ، وَإِشْرَافِيْهِ فِي أَمْرِيِّهِ,
وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمَ بِمَيْنِيْ، أَلِيْهِما، آمُّرَ لِي خَطْطِيْهِ وَرَجْلِيْهِ،
وَخَطْطِيْهِ وَرَجْلِيْهِ، وَكَلِّ ذَلِكَ علَيْيِهِ.

“O Allāh! Forgive me my error, my ignorance, my transgression in my affairs and all that which You know better than I. O Allāh! Forgive my jesting, my solemnity, and my mistakes—both intentional and unintentional—for all of them are from me.”

اللّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي مَا قَدْمَتْ، وَمَا أَخْرَتْ، وَمَا أَسْرَرْتُ،
وَمَا أَعْلَمْتُ، وَمَا أَسْرَرْتُ، وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمَ بِمَيْنِيَا، أَنْتَ
الْمُقَدِّمُ، وَأَنْتَ الْمُؤْهَرُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدَرِيِّهِ

“O Allāh! Forgive my past and future sins, what I did secretly and what I did openly, and all that which You

48 Abū Dāwūd [#1516] and at-Tirmidhī [#3434] on the authority of  ibn 'Umar. Similar aḥādīth are recorded on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, Ḥudhayfah, Abū Mūsā by Ḥādīd; ‘Ā’īshah by Bukhārī; Adab al-Mufrad [#619]; Anas, Khubāb and as-Sā‘īb by an-Nasā’ī; ‘Amāl [#461-463]

The hadīth is ṣaḥīḥ and declared so by al-Baghwā [#1289], ibn Ḥiibbān [#927] and al-Albānī [#556]
know better than I. You are the one who brings forward and leaves behind and You are the Omnipotent." 49

The Two Şahihş record the ḥadīth on the authority of Abū Hurayrah who asked the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) about what he said in his period of silence between the opening *takbir* for prayer and his recitation, he replied, I say:

\[
\text{ اللَّهُمَّ بِأَعْفَا بِنَي وَبِأَعْفَا حَطَابِي كَمَا بِأَعْفَا أَمْضَى}
\]
\[
\text{ وَالْمَغْرَبِ، اللَّهُمَّ نَقْسِي مِنْ حَطَابِي كَمَا نَقْسِيَ الْمَغْرَبَ}
\]
\[
\text{ الأَيْضُ مِنْ الدَّنْسِ، اللَّهُمَّ اغْسِلِي مِنْ حَطَابِي}
\]
\[
\text{ بِالْبُلْجِ وَالْبَلْدَاءُ وَالْبَلْدَاءُ.}
\]

"O Allāh! Distance my sins from me in the same way as You have distanced the east from west. O Allāh! Cleanse me of my sins in the same way that a white garment is cleansed of dirt. O Allāh! Wash my sins from me with water, ice and snow." 50

Muslim and others record that he (ﷺ) would say a similar sup-

49 Bukhārī [#6398, 6399] and Muslim [#2719]

50 Bukhārī [#744] and Muslim [#598]

The author, may Allāh have mercy upon him, comments on this ḥadīth thus, ‘Sins lead to the heart feeling feverish, impure and weak. The heart becomes remiss and the fire of lusts is kindled within it serving to sully it; sins are to the heart what wood is to fire. This is why as sins increase, so too does the fire in the heart and its weakness. Water washes away the filth and extinguishes the fire, if this water is cold it shocks the body and revitalises its strength, this effect is heightened with snow and ice and hence is more effective in vanquishing the effects of sins.’—Quoted of him by ibn al-Qayyim, *Ighāthatu-l-Lahfān* [1/94]
plication upon raising his head from the *rukū‘*.\(^{51}\)

Muslim records the ḥadīth on the authority of ‘Alī that the Prophet (ﷺ) would say in the opening supplication for prayer,

اللهُمَّ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ، أَنْتَ رَبِّي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ،
َّطَمَّتُ تَفَابِي وَأُعْفِنْتُ بِذَلِكَ فَاغْفِرْ لِي ذُنُوبِي جَمِيعًا إِلَهَ
َّلَا تَعْفِرُ الْذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، وَأَهْدِي لِلْحَسَنِ الأَخْلَاقِ لَا
َّيَهْدِي لِلْحَسَنِ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، وَأَصْرَفْ عَلَيْيْ سَبْبَتَهَا
َّلَا يَصْرِفُ عَلَيْيْ سَبْبَتَهَا إِلَّا أَنْتَ

"O Allāh! You are the King, there is none worthy of worship save You. You are my Lord and I am your servant. I have wrought evil so forgive me for none forgives sins save You. Guide me to the best morals and manners for none guides me to them save You; turn me away from evil morals and manners for none turns me away from them save You." \(^{52}\)

Muslim records the ḥadīth that the Prophet (ﷺ) would say in his *sajdah*,

اللهُمَّ آغْفِرْ لِي ذُنُوبِي كُلُّهَا، دُفْهَ وَحَلَّهَا، وَأَوْلَهَا وَأَجْرَهَا،
َّوَعِلَائِينِهَا وَسِيرَهَا

"O Allāh! Forgive me all my sins, the small and great, the open and secret, the first and last." \(^{53}\)

The Sunan record the ḥadīth on the authority of ‘Alī that the

\(^{51}\) Muslim [#476] and Nasa‘ī [1/198, 1/199]

\(^{52}\) Muslim [#771] and Abū Dāwūd [#760]

\(^{53}\) Muslim [#483] and Abū Dāwūd [#878]
Prophet was brought an animal to ride whereupon he praised Allāh and said,

**سُبْحَانَ**

الَّذِي صَحِبَ لَهَا هَدَايَاً وَمُسْتَفَقَّرُونَ وَرَأَا إِلَيْهِ رَبَّهُ

"Glory be to Him who has subjected this to us. We could never have done it by ourselves and indeed we are returning to Our Lord"

[aż-Zukhruf (43): 13-14]

Then he praised Him and exalted Him and said, ‘Glory be to You! I have wronged myself, so forgive me for none forgives sins save You.’ Then he smiled and said, ‘The Lord is well pleased with His servant when he says, ‘Forgive me for none forgives sins save You,’ He says, ‘My servant knows that there is none who forgives sins save Me.’”

Allāh, Exalted is He, says,

**قَالَ قَلُوبُ أَنْفُسَ الْأُمَّةِ اِلَّهُ إِلَّاَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقُواُهُ وَأَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِذَٰلِكَ إِلَّاَّ الَّذِينَ مَنْ عَلِمَ مِنْهُمْ وَمَنْ طَمَنُّواُهُ وَمَا أَخْرَجْنَهُمْ مِنْ ذِيَلَكَ وَمَا تَأْخَرَ وَمَا تَرَفَّعَ ذِيَالِكَ وَهُدِّيْلُكَ بِرَسَالَةٍ مَّسْتَفِقِيَّةٍ**

"...and ask forgiveness for your wrongdoing, and for the men and women who are believers"

[Muhammad (47): 19]

54 Abū Dāwūd [#2602] and at-Tirmidhī [#3446].

At-Tirmidhī said that it was ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ and it is was declared ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albānī, Ṣaḥīḥ at-Tirmidhī [#2742, 2743].
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"Truly We have granted you a clear victory, so that Allah may forgive you your earlier sins and any later ones"

[al-Fath (48): 1-2]

The Two Şahîhs record the hadîth concerning the intercession, in which ‘İsâ says, Go to Muḥammad, a servant whose past and future sins have been forgiven by Allâh.55

The Şâhîh records the hadîth that the Prophet (ﷺ) would stand [in prayer] until his feet would swell and it was asked of him, ‘Why do you do this when Allâh has forgiven your past and future sins?’ He replied, ‘Should I then not be a grateful servant?’56

One can also ask for forgiveness and repent for leaving the best course, so whoever moves to a state better than the one he was in previously could repent from his previous state; however censure and threat can only exist for sin.57 Allâh knows best.58

55 Bukhâri [#44, 7410, 7440, 7509, 7515] and Muslim [#193]

56 Bukhâri [#1130, 4836, 6471] and Muslim [#2819]

57 The author, al-Istighfâr [p. 64] says, ‘To be totally correct, the punishment for sins is of two types, torment which can be removed by many good deeds; or decrease in ranking and prevention from something one deserves. Allâh, Exalted is He, expiates the sins of the sinner as He says, “If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate your [lesser] sins” [an-Nisâ’ (4): 31]. Sometimes He expiates them by putting a person through tribulation, in which case his ranking stays the same or even increases, and at other times He expiates them because of good deeds that person has done.’

APPENDIX TWO

‘Does the mere acknowledgement of sin combined with tawhid lead to its forgiveness?’

With regards the question, ‘Does the mere acknowledgement of sin combined with tawhid lead to its forgiveness and the alleviation of difficulty, or is something else required?’ we answer by saying:

What leads to forgiveness of sins, along with tawhid, is repentance;¹ for example Allah will not forgive shirk unless it be repented from as He, Exalted is He, says in two places,

¹ The conditions for repentance are as follows: sincerity, feeling remorse for that sin, repenting, and not persisting in the sin, “And those, who when they commit and indecent deed, or wrong themselves, remember Allāh and seek forgiveness for their sins—and who can forgive sins except Allāh?—and who do not persist in what they have done while they know. Those—their reward is forgiveness from their Lord...” [Āli ‘Imrān (3): 135-136]

Moreover repenting before it is too late, i.e. before the final throes of death or before the sun rises from the west. The author alludes to these conditions, barring the last, in what follows of this chapter and the next.
Any sin, other than *shirk*, is forgiven if repented from, but if not, it is up to Allāh, if He wishes, He will forgive it and if He wishes, He will not. Allāh, Exalted is He, says

"Say: 'My servants, you who have transgressed against yourselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allāh. Truly Allāh forgives all sins, He is Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful’"

*[az-Zumar (39): 53]*

This verse concerns the penitent, and this is why the verse has been generalised and left unrestricted, and it has been decisively stated that He forgives all sins. In the previous verse, however, He says,

"...but He forgives whoever He wills for anything other than that...."

*[an-Nisā’ (4): 48, 116]*

specifying the forgiveness of all sins other than *shirk* to be dependant upon His will. Now if Allāh will only forgive *shirk* for the
one who asks forgiveness, and He will forgive any other sin that person repents from, the only meaning left for this verse is that those sins, other than *shirk*, that are not repented from, Allāh will forgive them, or not forgive them, as He wills.

Acknowledgment of sin, if it includes repentance, combined with *tawhid*, leads to forgiveness. When sin is forgiven, its punishment is averted for forgiveness is a shield protecting one from the evil of that sin.

Some people say that *al-ghafr* (forgiveness) means *as-satar* (covering) reasoning that *maghfirah* (forgiveness) and *al-Ghaffār* (the Oft-Forgiving) were only called so because of the meaning they carry of covering and hiding. They also explain the meaning of His Name, *al-Ghaffār* to be *as-Sattār* (the Coverer). This is an incomplete explanation of *al-ghafr*. The meaning of forgiveness is to shield oneself from the evil of sin such that he not be punished for it, hence the one who is forgiven is not punished for that sin. The meaning of covering does not imply this meaning, for the one whose sin has been hidden could still be punished for it in private.²

However, despite having repented, a person could still be tried with something that would serve to increase his reward and this does not negate the reality of forgiveness.

Moreover a person could think another to have repented of sin, but in reality he is merely someone who has abandoned that sin. The one who abandons is not the same as the one who has repented. A person may not commit a sin because it never occurred to him to do so, or because he was unable to, or his desire to commit it left him for a reason other than a religious one, all

² Refer to: *al-Mufradāt* [p. 362]; *Līsān al-‘Arab* [5/25]; *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughā* [4/385]
these reasons do not constitute repentance. It is necessary that the penitent believe that what he did was evil, that he hate that deed simply because Allāh prohibited it, and that he leave it for the sake of Allāh and not for some worldly desire or fear. Repentance is from the greatest of good deeds, and all good deeds can only be considered to be so if they are performed for the sake of Allāh and in accordance to His command. Fudayl bin ‘Iyād said concerning His saying,

\[\text{الَّذِي خَلَقَ}
\]

\[\text{السُّوَيَّةَ وَلَدَّيْهَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْصَرْنَاهُ عَلَيْهَا وَهُوَ الْمُلْمَعُ}
\]

“He Who created life and death to test which of you is best in deed”

\[\text{[al-Mulk (67): 2]}\]

‘The sincere and correct.’ When asked what that means he replied, ‘When an action is sincere but not correct, it will not be accepted. When it is correct but not sincere it will not be accepted. It will only be accepted when it is both sincere and correct; sincere that it be only for Allāh; correct that it be performed in the way taught by the Sunnah.’

‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb would say in his supplication, ‘O Allāh! Make all my deeds righteous, make them sincerely for Your face, and do not let any portion of them be for anyone else.’

The discussion on repentance has been expounded in detail elsewhere.

\[^3\] Tafsir al-Baghdādi [4/369]

\[^4\] Ahmad, az-Zuhd [#615] on the authority of al-Hasan from ‘Umar. Al-Hasan was not contemporary to ‘Umar.

\[^5\] Refer to the author’s, at-Tawbah.
As for acknowledging one's sin, in submissiveness to Allāh, but without the intent to abandon it, then this is merely asking for forgiveness and cannot be said to be repentance. This is like a person who asks of Allāh to forgive his sin but has not repented from it, one cannot be certain of his forgiveness for he is in the position of one who is making a mere supplication. It is established that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'There is no supplicant who supplicates for something that does not contain sin or the severing of kindred-relations, except that one of three things occur: either it is answered in this life; or he gets the likes of it in reward; or its equivalent in evil is averted from him.' They asked, 'O Messenger of Allāh, what if we frequently supplicate?' He replied, 'Allāh increases.'

The likes of this supplication could lead to forgiveness and if not, the attainment of some other good or the aversion of some evil. Hence, in all cases it brings about benefit and this is true of all supplications. Those amongst the scholars who said, 'Asking for forgiveness while persisting in that sin is the repentance of liars' meant one who claims to have repented, if such a person persists in his sin it becomes clear that he has not in reality repented for repentance and persistence in sin are two opposites. Persistence opposes repentance but it does not oppose the mere asking for forgiveness when divorced from repentance.

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6 Al-Maqdisi, Targhib at-Du‘ā [#21] on the authority of Anas. Similar hadiths are also reported on the authority of Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī by Aḥmad [#11133], ‘Ubadah bin as-Samit by at-Tirmidhī [#3573] and Abū Hurayrah by Aḥmad. At-Tirmidhī said it was hasan şāhīh, al-Hākim said it was şāhīh and adh-Dhahabī agreed as did al-Albānī, Şahīb at-Targhib [#1631]