

SUMMER IMMERSION

DIVINE ADDRESS



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SESSION 5

Verse of Hope

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

Say, 'O Prophet, that Allah says, 'O My servants who have exceeded the limits against their souls! Do not lose hope in Allah's mercy, for Allah certainly forgives all sins. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (39:53)

- Allah is the Most Merciful. This verse is a call of hope, commanding sinners never to despair of Allah's mercy, assuring that Allah forgives all sins, and urging a return to Him in repentance and full submission before it is too late.
 - Abdullah ibn Mas'ud claims it is one of the most hopeful verses in the Qur'an in times of despair.
 - Abdullah ibn Umar stated: I do not know any verse in the Qur'an that is more hopeful in Allah's mercy than this verse.
- The Context of Revelation:
 - 1. The case of Hisham ibn al-As
 - When Umar migrated from Makkah to Madinah, he made a plan to leave with some friends Hisham ibn al-As and Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi'ah - both whose fathers were enemies of Islam.

- They set a rule: if anyone did not arrive by morning, it meant they were captured, and the others should leave without them.
- Hisham was detained and tortured by Makkan disbelievers. He was greatly tested and yielded under pressure to renounce Islam.
- When this verse was revealed, Umar personally wrote it and sent it to Hisham, letting him know that Allah's mercy and forgiveness remained open.
- Upon receiving it, Hisham repeatedly read the lines without grasping the message. He cried out daily, "O Allah, make me understand it," until Allah granted him understanding of the ayah, prompting him to ride out and rejoin the Prophet (ﷺ) in Madinah.
- 2. The inquiry from the polytheists of Makkah
 - According to narrations from Ibn 'Abbas, certain people in Makkah during the period of Jahiliyyah wanted to accept Islam. However, they held back, saying: "Muhammad claims that whoever worships idols and unjustly kills souls which God has made sacred will not be forgiven. We have done both; how can we embrace Islam now?"
 - This verse reassures that Allah erases all past sins upon conversion. While personal sins between a person and Him are subject to His mercy, wrongs against others require the victim's pardon. Nevertheless, Allah is the final judge.
- 3. The pardoning of Wahshi ibn Harb
 - Wahshi ibn Harb killed Hamza (the Prophet's uncle) during the Battle of Uhud. After the Conquest of Makkah, he was listed among those ordered to be killed during the Conquest of Makkah. When Makkah was conquered, Wahshi initially fled to Ta'if.

- When messengers were sent to Wahshi, he asked if there was leverage for someone like him to become Muslim. Allah revealed the verse conditioned on Allah's absolute will or strict repentance (25:70). Wahshi felt those conditions were too difficult for his immense guilt. It meant he had to repent, convert, do good deeds before his actions were forgiven.
- Then, when Allah revealed the verse stating His mercy against all crimes except shirk (4:48), Wahshi felt that being at the mercy of Allah, he would not be forgiven. When this verse (39:53) was communicated as an ultimate reassurance of boundless mercy, it finally prompted him to accept Islam.
- Wahshi traveled to Madinah to meet the Prophet (ﷺ). He came with his face veiled to accept Islam and seek amnesty. He asked the Prophet (ﷺ) if there was hope for someone who committed shirk, murder, and major sins, to repent to Allah.
- The Prophet (ﷺ) revealed verses 25:68-70. When he revealed his identity and spoke the testimony of faith, the Prophet (ﷺ) asked if he was the one who killed Hamza. Confirming the act, the Prophet (ﷺ) granted him amnesty, but requested, "Hide your face from me, if you are able," due to the painful memory of his uncle.
- Breakdown of the Ayah:
 - قُلْ (Qul) — Say:
 - There are different contextual aspects of Qul which include responding to questions from the Sahabah, delivering proclamations to the disbelieving Quraysh, and establishing core theological truths.
 - The nuance of omitting or including Qul in the Qur'an:

- The absence of Qul
 - In Arabic, even having an extra word means distance. Removing the extra verb strips away any conversational gap, emphasizing Allah's nearness to His servant.
 - Example: In Surah Al-Baqarah 2:186, when servants ask about Allah, the response comes instantly without a linguistic intermediary: "I am near".
- The presence of Qul
- When Qul is commanded, Allah positions the Prophet (ﷺ) as the loving voice, bridging Allah and human experience.
- Hearing truth spoken through the Prophet (ﷺ), who was sent as a mercy to mankind, softens harsh realities, offering a merciful framework for mankind to receive guidance.
- يا (Ya) — O:
 - In Arabic, Ya is used to call out or draw near. It is a personal address, making the listener feel seen and spoken to by name.
 - Allah uses this word to show someone is walking away and He is calling out to bring that person back.
- عِبَادِي (Ibadi) — My servants:
 - عباد (Ibad) signifies a dignified worshipper of Allah, it is used as a term of respect and honor. However, Allah uses this word to claim ownership and love even for those who transgressed.
 - The word عبد (Abd) is usually used to denote someone special to Allah. It is paired with Allah's names Abdullah "Servant of Allah," and Abdul Rahman "Servant of the Most Merciful," they become the most beloved names to Allah.

- Narrator: Ibn 'Umar: The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

أَحَبُّ الْأَسْمَاءِ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَعَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ

"The most beloved of your names to Allah are 'Abdullah and 'Abdur-Rahman." (Sahih Muslim)

- Example: In Surah Al-Isra (17:1) Allah used the term bi'abdihi ("His servant") as the highest expression of honor for the Prophet (ﷺ), describing his journey during Isra wal Mi'raj.
- الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا (Alladhina Asrafu): Those who have transgressed / exceeded the limits
 - إِسْرَافٍ (Israf) — Refers to transgressing the limits set by Allah. Meaning, one who heavily sins without thinking of the consequences.
- أَعْلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ ('Ala Anfusihi) — Against themselves:
 - Sinning harms us first and reduces our blessings (rizq), as disobedience hurts our own souls rather than Allah.
 - It was narrated from Thawban that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

" لَا يَزِيدُ فِي الْعُمُرِ إِلَّا الْبِرُّ وَلَا يَرُدُّ الْقَدَرَ إِلَّا الدُّعَاءُ وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيُخْرَمَ الرِّزْقُ بِالذَّنْبِ يُصِيبُهُ "

"Nothing increases one's life span except righteousness and nothing repels the Divine decree except supplication, and a man may be deprived of provision by a sin that he commits." (Sunan Ibn Majah)

- When a person feels no spiritual impact or guilt from their sins, it shows a dangerous hardening of the heart and a lack of divine guidance. Conversely, feeling the weight or consequence of a sin, is a sign the heart is still alive and a person is beloved to Allah, pulling them back to repentance.

- Allah tells us:

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ

So when they forgot that by which they had been reminded, We opened to them the doors of every [good] thing until, when they rejoiced in that which they were given, We seized them suddenly, and they were [then] in despair. (6:44)

- Ibn Abbas advised that a sinner should never take their sin lightly. He explained that the attitude and actions following the sin can be far worse than the initial misdeed itself.
 - لا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ (La taqnatu min rahmati-llah) — Do not despair of the mercy of Allah:
 - This is a reminder never to give up hope on Allah's mercy, no matter how many mistakes or sins one has committed.
 - On the authority of Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: Allah the Almighty said:

يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ ، إِنَّكَ مَا دَعَوْتَنِي وَرَجَوْتَنِي ، غَفَرْتُ لَكَ عَلَى مَا كَانَ مِنْكَ وَلَا أُبَالِي . يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ : لَوْ بَلَغَتْ ذُنُوبُكَ عَنَانَ السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ اسْتَغْفَرْتَنِي ، غَفَرْتُ لَكَ . يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ : إِنَّكَ لَوْ أَتَيْتَنِي بِقُرَابِ الْأَرْضِ خَطَايَا ثُمَّ لَقِيتَنِي لَا تُشْرِكُ بِي شَيْئاً ، لَأَتَيْتُكَ بِقُرَابِهَا مَغْفِرَةً

O 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 of 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. (Jami` at-Tirmidhi)

- إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا (Innallaha yaghfiruz-zunuba jamee'aa) — Indeed, Allah forgives all sins:
 - Carrying many sins can cause despair, but Allah reminds us that no sin is too great for His mercy, and He always waits for us to repent.

- Allah welcomes and loves when we turn back to Him.
 - Abu Hurairah reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, said:

أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي وَأَنَا مَعَهُ حَيْثُ يَذْكُرُنِي وَاللَّهُ لِلَّهِ أَفْرَحُ بِتَوْبَةِ عَبْدِهِ مِنْ أَحَدِكُمْ يَجِدُ ضَالَّتَهُ بِالْفَلَاحِ وَمَنْ تَقَرَّبَ إِلَيَّ شِبْرًا تَقَرَّبْتُ إِلَيْهِ ذِرَاعًا وَتَقَرَّبْتُ إِلَيْهِ بَاعًا وَإِذَا أَقْبَلَ إِلَيَّ يَمْتَنِي أَقْبَلْتُ إِلَيْهِ أَهْرُولُ "

I live in the thought of My servant and I am with him as he remembers Me. (The Holy Prophet) further said: By Allah, Allah is more pleased with the repentance of His servant than what one of you would do on finding the lost camel in the waterless desert. When he draws near Me by the span of his hand. I draw near him by the length of a cubit and when he draws near Me by the length of a cubit. I draw near him by the length of a fathom and when he draws near Me walking I draw close to him hurriedly. (Sahih Muslim)

- Making tawbah in our youth is more beloved by Allah. Do not wait for a massive crisis or old age to turn back. Make short, daily habits of seeking forgiveness. For example, saying:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ

Allahumma inni astaghfiruka wa atubu ilaik

O Allah, I seek Your forgiveness and I turn to You in repentance.

- إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (Innahu huwal-ghafurur-rahim) — Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful:
 - The Prophet (ﷺ) is told by Allah to share with the world that He is the Most Merciful.
 - This is absolute assurance that there is none other than Him who holds ultimate mercy and forgiveness.
 - Allah constantly forgives our sins if we sincerely repent to Him every time we slip, no matter how often we repeat the mistake.

- Narrated Abu Hurairah: I heard the Prophet (ﷺ) saying,

"إِنَّ عَبْدًا أَصَابَ ذَنْبًا - وَرَبَّمَا قَالَ أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا - فَقَالَ رَبِّ أَذْنَبْتُ - وَرَبَّمَا قَالَ أَصَبْتُ - فَاعْفُزْ لِي فَقَالَ رَبُّهُ أَعْلِمَ عَبْدِي أَنَّ لَهُ رَبًّا لَا يَغْفِرُ الذَّنْبَ وَيَأْخُذُ بِهِ غَفَرْتُ لِعَبْدِي. ثُمَّ مَكَثَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ، ثُمَّ أَصَابَ ذَنْبًا أَوْ أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا، فَقَالَ رَبِّ أَذْنَبْتُ - أَوْ أَصَبْتُ - آخَرَ فَاعْفُزْهُ. فَقَالَ أَعْلِمَ عَبْدِي أَنَّ لَهُ رَبًّا لَا يَغْفِرُ الذَّنْبَ وَيَأْخُذُ بِهِ غَفَرْتُ لِعَبْدِي، ثُمَّ مَكَثَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا - وَرَبَّمَا قَالَ أَصَابَ ذَنْبًا - قَالَ قَالَ رَبِّ أَصَبْتُ - أَوْ أَذْنَبْتُ - آخَرَ فَاعْفُزْهُ لِي. فَقَالَ أَعْلِمَ عَبْدِي أَنَّ لَهُ رَبًّا لَا يَغْفِرُ الذَّنْبَ وَيَأْخُذُ بِهِ غَفَرْتُ لِعَبْدِي - ثَلَاثًا - فَلْيَعْمَلْ مَا شَاءَ."

"If somebody commits a sin and then says, 'O my Lord! I have sinned, please forgive me!' and his Lord says, 'My slave has known that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for it, I therefore have forgiven my slave (his sins).' Then he remains without committing any sin for a while and then again commits another sin and says, 'O my Lord, I have committed another sin, please forgive me,' and Allah says, 'My slave has known that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for it, I therefore have forgiven my slave (his sin). Then he remains without committing any another sin for a while and then commits another sin (for the third time) and says, 'O my Lord, I have committed another sin, please forgive me,' and Allah says, 'My slave has known that he has a Lord Who forgives sins and punishes for it I therefore have forgiven My slave (his sin), he can do whatever he likes.'" (Sahih al-Bukhari)

- Shaytan wants people to feel hopeless and believe their sins are too great for forgiveness, but turning back to Allah immediately breaks that despair. The Prophet (ﷺ) highlighted this fact in an exchange between Allah and Shaytan.
 - Abu Sa'id al-Khudri reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said,

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ قَالَ وَعِزَّتِكَ يَا رَبِّ لَا أَبْرَحُ أُغْوِي عِبَادَكَ مَا دَامَتْ أَرْوَاحُهُمْ فِي أَجْسَادِهِمْ قَالَ الرَّبُّ وَعِزَّتِي وَجَلَالِي لَا أَرَالُ أَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَغْفَرُونِي

"Satan said: By Your might, O Lord, I will continue to mislead the children of Adam, as long as their souls are in their bodies. The Lord said: By My might and majesty, I will continue to forgive them, as long as they seek My forgiveness." (Musnad Ahmad)

- An important reminder: Sometimes, a sin that sparks sincere regret can elevate a person to higher maqam than an act of ibadah.

