

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

# Submitters Perspective

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## God is the Pardoner

Obedience and punishment are two opposite sides of a coin. We need to follow a certain set of rules in our social life and if we fail to follow these rules then we may be punished. In this material world when you are caught, you have three options in front of you. 1) You pay the fine, or 2) You are put behind bars, or in some corrupt situations 3) You bribe the "authority" and escape.

Similarly, in this short span of life we need to abide by the commandments of God. But the reality is there are gross violations of God's commandments everywhere. This is to the detriment of the people's souls (including our own when we sin). But, although we may violate the commandments of God, He gives us space and time to repent and reform. Just imagine the Almighty, Master of Universe is waiting for your repentance. He gives you so many opportunities to seek forgiveness, repent, reform and do better. God is the Pardoner.

In common parlance, to pardon means to forgive a person of his offence. A grant of pardon wipes off the guilt of the accused and brings him to the

original position of innocence, as if he had never committed the offence for which he was charged.

It is said: "To err is human and to forgive is divine." Both parts of this statement are very true. As human beings we are responsible, but we do also make mistakes and we are constantly in need of forgiveness. There are two elements of forgiveness: a) God's forgiveness; b) Human forgiveness. We need both, because we do wrong in our relations to God as well as in our relations to each other.

There are many names of God given in the Qur'an. Some of these names are related to His mercy and forgiveness.

**1. Al-Ghafoor (The Forgiver):** This name occurs in the Qur'an more than 70 times. There are other names from the same root, such as Ghafir and Ghaffar. The meaning of the Arabic word "ghafara" is to cover, to hide and from it comes the meaning "to excuse," "to pardon," "to remit" and "to forgive." God does all these things. We must turn to God to seek His forgiveness.

[4:116] *GOD does not forgive idol worship (if maintained until death),\* and He forgives lesser offenses for whomever He wills. Anyone who idolizes any idol beside GOD has strayed far astray.*

\*4:116 *A simple definition of idolatry: Believing that anything beside God can help you.*

**2. Al-'Afw (The Pardoner):** This is yet another quality of God which plays the part of forgiveness. This name occurs in the Qur'an around five times. Literally, the word 'Afw means "to release," "to heal," "to restore," "to remit." Thus, in relation to God it means to release us from the burden of punishment due to our sins and mistakes; to restore our honour after we have dishonoured ourselves by committing sins and making mistakes.

**3. Al-Tawwab (The Acceptor of Repentance):** This name of God is mentioned in the Qur'an about 11 times. God accepts repentance of those who sincerely repent and turn to him. The word "tawwab" gives the sense of "oft-returning," which means that He again and again accepts the repentance. We make sins and mistakes, then we re-

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pent; He accepts our repentance. Then we commit sins again and make mistakes and when we repent, He again very kindly accepts us and gives us another chance.

**4. Al-Haleem (The Clement):** This name is mentioned around fifteen times in the Qur'an. This means that God is not quick to judge you. He gives time. He forebears and is patient to see His servant return to Him.

**5. Al-Rahman and Al-Rahim (The Most Gracious and The Most Merciful):** These names are the most frequent in the Qur'an. Al-Rahman is mentioned 57 times and Al-Raheem is mentioned 114 times. Al-Rahman indicates that God's grace is abundant, and Al-Raheem indicates that God is full of love and mercy and is ever Merciful.

The Qur'an teaches that God is a Judge and He also punishes. The justice of God, according to Qur'an is that God does not and will not inflict undue punishment on any person. He will take into account everything they have done including the good deeds. And if He wishes to forgive any sinner, He has full freedom to do that. Mercy is His attribute, and His grace is infinite.

Just as it is important to believe in God's mercy and forgiveness, it is also necessary to include forgiveness in human relations. God tells us as we love to attain His forgiveness, we should be charitable, kind and tolerant ourselves (24:22). We should pray for forgiveness for the believers (47:19) and use the best response towards those who have wronged us personally (41:33-35). All for the sake of God, and in accordance with His teachings (2:272, 48:29).

*[42:37] They avoid gross sins and vice, and when angered they forgive.*

*[42:40] Although the just requital for an injustice is an equivalent retribution, those who pardon and maintain righteousness are rewarded by GOD.*

*He does not love the unjust.*

*[16:126] And if you punish, you shall inflict an equivalent punishment. But if you resort to patience (instead of revenge), it would be better for the patient ones. [16:127] You shall resort to patience—and your patience is attainable only with GOD's help. Do not grieve over them, and do not be annoyed by their schemes.*

We sometimes see people fighting, abusing and hurting each other on petty issues, which could have been easily avoided. The root cause of many human conflicts and disputes is ego, and Satan is ever ready to ignite our ego. We submitters must thank God frequently for only He can protect us from this kind of behavior. God advocates patience and pardoning.

God has also sent the prophets and messengers to set the role models for us. Almost all of them were humiliated, hurt, abused and tortured by various means, yet they did not budge from the right path. There are various incidents mentioned in the Quran related to the torments faced by them. But their endurance to sustain all attacks and rock-solid belief in God made them triumphant. The prophets and messengers of God set the benchmark of good behavior for our guidance. God tested these noble individuals and it shows that it is not at all impossible for us to follow it.

There are a number of obstacles that lurk hidden for the one who seeks repentance. Perhaps the greatest is the feeling of fear and despondence. Many feel that it is simply too late to change: "I've done my dirt and there is simply no way to get back on track."

First, we should understand that all humans sin. And God knows every person commits sins. The important part is that as sinners we repent. Many have claimed that the feelings of profound guilt and depression regarding their state chained them from turning to God. This is one of the greatest tricks of the devil; closing the door of hope to God's mercy after sin-

ning. The following verse changed my thinking enormously, for it is this verse which installed a huge hope of possible redemption by God.

*[2:286] GOD never burdens a soul beyond its means: to its credit is what it earns, and against it is what it commits. "Our Lord, do not condemn us if we forget or make mistakes. Our Lord, and protect us from blaspheming against You, like those before us have done. Our Lord, protect us from sinning until it becomes too late for us to repent. Pardon us and forgive us. You are our Lord and Master. Grant us victory over the disbelieving people."*

I sometimes think that God can turn our sins into a lesson for redemption. Let me explain. When a person commits a sin, and he is sorry, he will think about his sin. This act causes him to fear God, regret his mistakes, weep over it and feel small in front of his Lord due to it. He stands before God broken-hearted and yearning for God's guidance and forgiveness. The sin may cause him to be honest about his own failings and where he needs to change, and become more humble. This in turn may lead him to repent and lead a righteous life, which is a key step to finding happiness and success. God willing, if he can remain on the right path, it may be the way for him to enter Paradise. But we must rebound from sin and not persist in it. If we were to ask people what it was that brought them back to faith, many would mention a mistake they had made in the past.

*[9:118] Also (redeemed were) the three who stayed behind. The spacious earth became so straitened for them, that they almost gave up all hope for themselves. Finally, they realized that there was no escape from GOD, except to Him. He then redeemed them that they may repent. GOD is the Redeemer, Most Merciful.*

Notice the wordings at the end of this verse "He then redeemed them that they may repent." Thus, repentance

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didn't start with the sinner, but it was God's mercy. The sinner was lost and God found him, guided him and forgave him. One may think, "I've done so many things in the past and failed to repent. How is it that, after all these years, I could face God with such a blackened record?"

But, God has told us that we can repent even if we exceeded the limits (39:53). But it's important to do so now, not wait until death comes. Thus, as long as one sincerely turns to God seeking His forgiveness, then one can believe God when He says He will forgive us. God is the Pardoner, the Forgiver. Furthermore, there is no sin (except killing a believer on purpose or maintaining idol worship until death) too great for God's immense mercy and forgiveness. Therefore, it is never too late to repent and reform. The following verses assure us of His immense mercy upon us.

*[21:87] And Zan-Noon (Jonah, "the one with an 'N' in his name"), abandoned his mission in protest, thinking that we could not control him. He ended up imploring from the darkness (of the big fish's belly): "There is no god other than You. Be You glorified. I have committed a gross sin."*

*[21:88] We responded to him, and saved him from the crisis; we thus save the believers.*

*[53:32] They avoid gross sins and transgressions, except for minor offenses. Your Lord's forgiveness is immense. He has been fully aware of you since He initiated you from the earth, and while you were embryos in your mothers' bellies. Therefore, do not exalt yourselves; He is fully aware of the righteous.*

We need to imbibe the following qualities in us while repenting to God a firm repentance: A) Leaving the sin forever, B) Regretting wholeheartedly for committing the sin and C) Resolving never to return to the sin again. We know God will never let us down, because He is the Most Faithful, the

Pardoner. We must never forget that God is Omnipresent. We should never forget that He has chosen us from the billions to receive guidance and learn about righteousness. He has given us the wisdom to distinguish between right and wrong. It is due to His immense mercy that we understand the correct meaning of His scripture. We must also not forget that this is the last chance we have to make it to the eternal Paradise. It is now or never. When you stand for your Salat, think that it is your last Salat every time, then the level of your reverence will reach new heights.

Let us pray to God to give us strength and reverence to earn maximum blessings of God and grow our soul enormously. I once again repeat that God is the only Pardoner.

*[42:25] He is the One who accepts the repentance from His servants, and remits the sins. He is fully aware of everything you do.*

*[4:99] These may be pardoned by GOD. GOD is Pardoner, Forgiver.*

*Abdul Ghani*

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## Rewards and Punishments in the Hereafter

To qualify to be a Submitter is to truly live in accordance with the will and pleasure of God. The Divine Commandments give an all-inclusive guidance to the believers to enable them to lead a respectable, content and flourishing life and more than enough to make it to Paradise, God willing. They cover all our aspects from birth to death. We must read, ponder and reflect and then awareness, knowledge and guidance will flow to us.

*[15:85] We did not create the heavens and the earth, and everything between them, except for a specific purpose. The end of the world will come, so treat them*

*with benign neglect.*

*[51:56] I did not create the jinns and the humans except to worship Me alone.*

We must understand that there is accountability in a life after death, and this is one of the most fundamental and essential doctrines in the Quran. We generally are more allured by the life in this world although the Quran repeatedly tells us that the Hereafter is timeless.

*[87:16-17] Indeed, you are preoccupied with this first life. Even though the Hereafter is far better and everlasting.*

The disbelievers and unbelievers who deny the existence of God also obviously refute the possibility of any afterlife and thus any accountability. They may perform great charities and virtuous acts but will do so not for the earning of God's pleasure but because of some philosophical motivation or simply because it makes them "feel good". They may have no reward in the Hereafter. The Quran clearly says *[11:15-16] Those who pursue this worldly life and its material vanities, we will pay them for their works in this life; without the least reduction. It is they who gave up their share in the Hereafter, and, consequently, Hell is their lot. All their works are in vain; everything they have done is nullified.*

To God belongs our ultimate fate in the Hereafter. Our deeds will be exposed. God has given us the criteria for our award or retribution on the Day of Judgment. This would apply to all communities that have come before us and are to follow. *[2:134] Such is a community from the past. They are responsible for what they earned, and you are responsible for what you earned. You are not answerable for anything they have done.* So, the revelations are very clear as to what the recompense is depending on our good or bad deeds. All bad comes from us and all good comes only from God (4:79). Hope and contentment flow from a steadfast faith in God and an equally unwavering belief of a future life for works performed

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correctly in this world.

We know that this worldly life is transitory but nevertheless it is a stepping stone to the Hereafter. It is the instrument God has given us to make it to Paradise. This life then becomes the testing ground for our performance and our final destiny.

God has allowed us to seek forgiveness for the wrongs we do. God in His infinite mercy knows that we will do many deeds due to our ignorance and if we earnestly realise them, repent and reform, then God will guide us to do better. As it is, He overlooks many of our sins (42:30, 34; 46:16).

*[2:160] As for those who repent, reform, and proclaim, I redeem them. I am the Redeemer, Most Merciful. [20:82] I am surely Forgiving for those who repent, believe, lead a righteous life, and steadfastly remain guided. But this repentance becomes null and void if we continue to persist in these sins [4:18] Not acceptable is the repentance of those who commit sins until death comes to them, then say, "Now I repent." Nor is it acceptable from those who die as disbelievers. For these, we have prepared a painful retribution.*

Initially, we have the end of the world colloquially known as Doomsday when everyone and everything in this world will perish. God will then raise all up on

the Day of Resurrection and the Day of Judgment (39:68-70). Paradise will welcome the righteous while the evil doers will be cast into Hell. The Quran repeatedly informs us of the allegories connected with Heaven and Hell. Both are spelled out in the most graphic terms, be it the everlasting delight of Paradise or the agony and anguish of Hell. All this is done to make us envision even the remotest idea of the joy or the pain.

The Quran speaks of clothes of green velvet, satin, silver ornaments, drinks spiced with nectar and pure companions (76:21, 76:5, 2:25, 4:57, 4:122). The joy of the Hereafter is only for the righteous *[6:32] The life of this world is no more than illusion and vanity, while the abode of the Hereafter is far better for the righteous. Do you not understand?! [12:57] Additionally, the reward in the Hereafter is even better for those who believe and lead a righteous life.*

On the other hand, we have Hell where the sinners and the hypocrites are thrown into to abide forever. Even the world's most severe prisons have been breached now and again but from Hell there is no escape or reprieve *[4:56] Surely, those who disbelieve in our revelations, we will condemn them to the hell-fire. Whenever their skins are burnt, we will give them new skins. Thus, they will suffer continuously. GOD is Almighty, Most Wise. [14:16-17] Awaiting him is*

*Hell, wherein he will drink putrid water. He will gulp it down, though he cannot stand it, as death comes to him from every direction, but he will never die. Awaiting him is a terrible retribution.*

The penalty is levied on those transgressors who buy the life of this world at the expense of the Hereafter (2:86, 3:77). This judgment will be of the highest order unlike earthly justice where a judge could be misinformed or be incompetent, bribed etc. Our smallest virtuous act will be rewarded as God is Omnipresent, Omniscient. *[36:54] On that day, no soul will be wronged in the least. You will be paid precisely for whatever you did.*

We have not been created just to live for some years and then get completely obliterated. We have a role to play and our goal is to make it to the Gardens of Eden. We can only make it there if we strictly follow all the prescriptions and prohibitions enshrined in the Quran.

The Quran seeks to convey to all of us that retribution only befalls those who do wrong actions in this world and that material success of power and wealth is not the real success because though life starts here it certainly does not end here. This beautiful message is not one of hopelessness, doom and pessimism but on the contrary it showcases the true facts equitably and unambiguously.

Alim