

Munājāt Sha‘bāniyyah (5) – Divine Pardon before death

Based on the exposition by ’Āyatullāh Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir Taḥrīrī

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إِلَهِي كَأَنِّي بِنَفْسِي وَاقِفَةٌ بَيْنَ يَدَيْكَ وَ قَدْ أَظَلَّهَا حُسْنُ تَوَكُّلِي
عَلَيْكَ فَقُلْتَ (فَفَعَلْتَ) مَا أَنْتَ أَهْلُهُ وَ تَعَمَّدْتَنِي بِعَفْوِكَ

My God! As if I myself stand in your Presence while my high degree of trust and reliance upon You has shaded me; so You said [did] what You are worthy of, and (thereby) wrapped me in Your Pardon.

إِلَهِي إِنْ عَفَوْتَ فَمَنْ أَوْلَى مِنْكَ بِذَلِكَ وَ إِنْ كَانَ قَدْ دَنَا أَجَلِي وَ
لَمْ يُدْنِي (يُدْنِ) مِنْكَ عَمَلِي فَقَدْ جَعَلْتَ الْإِقْرَارَ بِالذَّنْبِ إِلَيْكَ
وَسَيْلَتِي

My God! If You pardon, then who is more suited than You to do so? And if my death has come near, and my deeds did not yet bring me close to You, then I make this confession of my sins to You a means of approaching You.

إِلَهِي قَدْ جُرْتُ عَلَى نَفْسِي فِي النَّظَرِ لَهَا فَلَهَا الْوَيْلُ إِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَهَا

My God! I have been unjust upon my soul due to fixation (on base needs) for its sake, and it will certainly be doomed if You do not forgive it.

إِلَهِي لَمْ يَزَلْ بِرُكِّكَ عَلَيَّ أَيَّامَ حَيَاتِي فَلَا تَقْطَعْ بِرُكِّكَ عَنِّي فِي مَمَاتِي

My God! You have continually been kind to me in my lifetime, so do not cut off Your favour from me at the time of my death.

Hopefulness in Divine pardon before death is a sure sign of a believer. Since death is unpredictable, and an affair inescapable; the seeker of His Proximity perpetually seeks His Pardon. What brings to light the urgency of the situation and simultaneously the beauty of Tawakkul, is the realization that as the wayfarer is whispering to his Beloved while standing in His Presence shaded by his firm Reliance upon Him, his ask for His Pardon is so trusting, as if it has already been received! What more than this is the Lord worthy of?

As the Holy Infallibles (‘a) show us, asking for God’s pardon is to be sought at the level of capacity of the Pardoner not the pardoned. The servant by virtue of being, has no duty but absolute obedience. Slips and sins make the servant unworthy, while the Merciful Lord has all the suitability for removing the effects of the vice. These words are simply not flowery, they represent the Reality – any capacity and virtue in the human is not from himself, rather a perfection granted by the Almighty, and even if it is misused and pardon sought, the servant deserves pardon only when it is sought from the One who granted the capacity to him in the first place. One such successful way is to pardon and overlook the faults of others, does one not like that the Almighty pardon him?¹

Confession of one’s sins is an act loved by the Almighty, since it is the epitome of one’s declaring his deficiency and inability before the Almighty, which amounts to admitting Perfection only for Him. Normally a believer shall perform good deeds with a sense of God’s Lordship over him, and with sincerity and dutifulness towards his relationship of servitude. While some may slip in these qualities, and yet some may consider their acts not as worthy in being presentable before the Lord, the sense of desperation dawns upon the wayfarer as he sees his death approach. In such a state, the slimmest chance of connecting with God by declaring one’s shortcoming and confession of sins, becomes the strongest rope of hopefulness for attaining eternal felicity and salvation.

Each person at his own level of connection with the Almighty faces a predicament - base material needs and desires for his own self draw a wayfarer away from his fixation on the Almighty and His Unity, towards multiplicity and lower perfections. Seeking forgiveness is the sure way to purify the soul, rectify its faulty fixation and seek perpetual kindness from the Almighty in this world and into the Hereafter.

Reflection: How can confession before the Almighty increase in our hopefulness in Him and softness of the heart?

Discussion (with a scholar) - What is the impact of pardon (‘afw) and forgiveness (ghufrān) on human felicity?

¹ Sūrah Nūr :22 (paraphrased)