

Memoirs of
**REPENTANT
PEOPLE**

Dr. Muhammad Al-'Areefi



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Memoirs of Repentant People

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Introduction

All praise is for Allah (SWT), the forgiver of sin, the acceptor of repentance, the severe in punishment, the bestower (of favors). None has the right to be worshipped but He, and to Him is the final return.

Praise be to Allah, when He intends a thing, He only says, "Be!" and it is. By His mercy, He saved Moosa (Peace be upon him) (Moses) and his nation against Pharaoh. Praise be to Allah, Who responded to the call of Prophet Nuh (Peace be upon him) (Noah). Moreover, by His mercy He relieved the distress of Prophet Yunus (Peace be upon him) (Jonah) when he supplicated to Him. Glory be to Him, who removed the calamity of Prophet Ayub (Peace be upon him) (Job) and brought Prophet Yusuf (Peace be upon him) (Joseph) back to his father after a long period of time.

I bear witness that there is no other god worthy of worship except Him, and that He has no partner. I bear witness that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger. O Allah, send Your peace and blessings upon him according to the number of those who remember Allah and the rotation of day and night.

To proceed:

This is a compilation of the memoirs and feelings of repentant people and those who have fallen into sin. These are confessions of the elderly who spent their youth in frivolity, young men whose lusts overwhelmed them and young women who committed sins. These are their memories of past and almost forgotten events, but have been recorded in the hope that they will benefit others.

These people have returned to Allah (SWT) and are waiting for His reward. They were once beset by temptations and lusts in various forms. Many had fallen into this quagmire and committed sins when their faith was weak and they had been overcome by Satan's whispers. These are people who believe in Allah's saying:

﴿نَبِّئْ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

"Declare (O Muhammad) unto My slaves, that truly, I am the Oft-Forgiving, the Most-Merciful." [Al-Hajar, 15:49]

Moreover, he believes in the saying of the Almighty (which means):

﴿وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ﴾

"And that My Torment is indeed the most painful torment." [Al-Hajar, 15: 50]

These are the tales of people whose repentance has pleased Allah. He does not need them, they need Him. Allah said to them in the Qudsi Hadeeth (sacred narration):

"O My slaves, you commit sins by night and by day, but I forgive all sins. So ask Me for forgiveness and I will forgive you."

Their Prophet (Peace be upon him) told them: "Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, stretches out His Hand during the night," so that they may repent for the faults committed from dawn to dusk.

A Companion Seeks Forgiveness

The first of these accounts is that of the old and blind Companion Ka'b ibn Maalik (May Allah be please with him) who spoke about the mistakes of his youth, in particular his failure to join the Battle of Tabuk (630 CE/8 AH). It was the last battle campaign led by the Prophet (Peace be upon him). The Prophet (Peace be upon him) allowed people to leave and prepare for the battle, while he collected the funds needed to prepare the army; eventually gathering together thirty thousand warriors. This was a time when people showed their true mettle.

They were preparing to battle in extreme heat and to travel a great distance to face a huge army. There were a large number of Muslims whose names were not registered in any records. It is reported in the two authentic collections of Al-Bukhari and Muslim that Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) was young, strong and wealthy and had a mount and weapons. "I can get ready in the blink of an eye," he said to himself. So he went on about his usual business. He kept procrastinating until he saw that people were preparing in earnest to leave with the Prophet (Peace be upon him).

"I can still organize everything tomorrow or after tomorrow," he said to himself. However, many days went by and he still did nothing, until one day he found that the army had left. He thought about hurrying to prepare his provisions and get his mount, but he hesitated because they had already travelled quite a distance ahead. When he finally got ready and decided to leave, he realized that there was no way he could reach them in time, and so he stayed in Madinah. He recalled: "I would walk in the streets of Madinah after the Prophet (Peace be upon him) left, and only see the hypocrites or disabled men who were excused from engaging in battle."

Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him), meanwhile, arrived in Tabuk with the Muslim army of thirty thousand soldiers. But when he looked around at the faces of his Companions, who had sworn allegiance at the treaty of Al-'Aqabah, he found that one of them was missing.

He asked: "What has Ka'b ibn Maalik done?"

A man replied: "O Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), he was left behind because of pride and arrogance."

Mu'adh ibn Jabal (May Allah be please with him) said: "You are lying! O Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), we only know him as a pious man." The Prophet (Peace be upon him) did not say anything.

Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) said: "When the Prophet (Peace be upon him) came back to Madinah from the Tabuk campaign, I kept thinking how I could avoid his anger so I sought the help of some wise people. Once he reached Madinah, I knew that the only thing that would save me was to tell the truth."

When the Prophet (Peace be upon him) arrived in Madinah, he went straight to the mosque, prayed two rak'ahs and sat down to listen to the people. More than eighty men came to apologize for not participating in the campaign, giving various excuses. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) accepted their excuses, asked forgiveness for them, and left their inner intentions to Allah.

Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) later went to the Prophet (Peace be upon him). "When I came to him and greeted him, he smiled an angry smile, and said, 'Come!' I sat before him and he asked, 'What kept you back?' I said, 'By Allah, if I were talking to anyone other than you I would be saved from his wrath by giving an excuse and I am an eloquent convincing man. If I were to tell you something (a falsehood) that would placate you, I know that Allah would make you angry with me instead, and I hope that by telling you the truth, Allah (SWT) will forgive me. By Allah, I have no excuse! And by Allah I was never stronger or wealthier than when I stayed back.' The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, 'This man has told the truth.' Then, turning to me, he said, 'Get up and await Allah's decree.'"

Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) left the mosque overwhelmed with misery; not knowing what Allah would do with him. When his people saw the state he was in, they followed and reproached him, saying: "We swear that we never saw you commit a mistake before. Were you not able to make excuses like those who stayed behind? Why don't you offer an excuse that will make the Prophet (Peace be upon him) pleased with you? Then, he will ask Allah to forgive you and you might be forgiven."

Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) said: "They kept persuading me to the (point where) I was about to go back and lie. I asked: 'Is anyone else facing the same situation?' They said: 'Yes, two men said the same thing as you and they were also given the same answer.'

"I said: 'Who were they?'

"They said: 'Muraarah ibn Ar-Rabi' and Hilaal ibn Umayyah.'

"They were two pious men who had participated in the Battle of Badr and I found consolation in this.

"I said: 'I swear that I will never go back to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) regarding this issue and I will never lie.'"

Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) went away with a broken heart and confined himself to his house. Shortly afterwards, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) forbade the Muslims to talk to Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) and the two others.

Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) said:

"People shunned us and their attitude towards us changed. Whenever I went to the market, no-one would talk to me, as if they did not know me. Everything appeared changed – even the walls seemed as if they were not the walls that we used to see and the earth was no longer the earth that we knew. My two companions stayed in their houses, crying day and night and supplicating like monks. And as for me, being a bold young man, I would go for prayer with the Muslims and roam the streets, but nobody would talk to me. I would greet the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and wait in vain for his lips to move. I would pray near him, and when I started my prayer, he would look at me and when I turned towards him, he would turn away."

Several days passed without any change. Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) was a nobleman in his tribe. He was the most eloquent poet and well known to kings and emirs. His poems were circulated among the elite and they wished to meet him. Now, he was in Madinah among his people, and no-one would talk to him or even look at him. In the middle of all these troubles and distress, he was given another test.

A Christian from the Levant came looking for him and the people rushed to tell him about Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) and where he could be found. The man handed Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) a message from the king of Ghassaan.

The news of his story had reached the Levant and the king of Ghassaan was concerned about him. Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) opened the message and read, "O Ka'b ibn Maalik, I was told that your companion (the Prophet (Peace be upon him)) has shunned you and turned away from you. Come to us and we will console you." When he read the message, he said: "We belong to Allah and to Him we will return. We have become fair game at the hands of the disbelievers!" This was another affliction. He burnt the message and ignored the king's tempting offer.

Indeed, the courts of kings and sultans were open to him, inviting him to be honored and respected. In turn, Madinah did not appear to like him and faces frowned at him. He greeted people but no-one

answered his greetings. Despite this, he paid no attention to the calls of the disbelievers nor did Satan succeed in deviating him or making him a slave of his passions.

One month later, Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) was still in the same situation. His burden was becoming heavier by the day and his distress worsened. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) did not take any decision nor did the revelation decree anything.

After forty days the people still shunned Ka'b (May Allah be please with him), until he felt as if the earth was closing in on him. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) sent him orders that he should keep away from his wife. "Should I divorce her?" he asked. "No, but isolate yourself, and do not touch her," he was told. The two other men who received the same order, sent a message back to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) asking him to let their wives stay near them to tend to their needs, but Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) insisted on carrying out the Prophet's order to the letter, and so he sent his wife to her parents.

Hilal ibn 'Umayyah's wife came to Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him) and said: "O Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), Hilal is an old man so will you allow me to serve him?" He said: "Yes, but he should not approach you." She said: "O Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), he is weak and he has been weeping since the beginning of this distress."

Those were difficult days for Ka'b (May Allah be please with him); the people continued to shun him. He spoke to them but no one would reply. He would greet the Prophet (Peace be upon him), but he would not reply to the greeting.

Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) said: "I felt so miserable, that one day I climbed the wall of Abu Qataadah, my cousin and best friend, and greeted him with Salaam. By Allah, he did not return my greeting. I asked him: 'By Allah, do you know that I love Allah and His Messenger (Peace be upon him)?' However, he remained silent.

"I asked him again: 'By Allah, do you know that I love Allah and His Messenger (Peace be upon him)?'

"Again, he kept silent.

"Once more, I asked him: 'By Allah, do you know that I love Allah and His Messenger (Peace be upon him)?' He then replied, 'Allah knows best.'"

Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) was stunned to hear this answer from his cousin, whom he loved the most. It was very difficult for him to hear those words and his eyes filled with tears. He came down from the wall and returned to his house.

At home, he spent his time staring listlessly at the walls; his wife was not there to comfort him and there was no relative to console him. Fifty days had passed since the Prophet (Peace be upon him) had forbidden people from talking to him.

On the fiftieth night, the news of the acceptance of their repentance was revealed to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) in the last third of the night. Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her, said: "O Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), should we not convey the glad tidings to Ka'b (May Allah be please with him)?" He replied: "In that case people would make a big clamor (out of happiness) and would prevent you from sleeping." So when the Prophet (Peace be upon him) performed the dawn prayer, he declared that Allah had accepted the repentance of Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) and his companions and people rushed to tell them the good news.

Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) said: "I was praying the dawn prayer that morning on the rooftop of my house. I was sitting in that state and remembering Allah the Almighty, until for me the

earth, vast as it is, felt straitened. I was worried that I would die and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) would not lead (my) funeral prayer; and just like people would not talk to me, no-one would offer the funeral prayer for me either. While in that state, I heard a man shouting from the top of Mount Sal', 'O Ka'b ibn Maalik, rejoice!' I fell down and prostrated. I knew that relief had come."

"A man riding a horse rushed towards me and there was someone else calling out from on (top of) a mountain. I heard the voice before I heard the horse. When I heard the glad tidings, I took off my garment and gave it to him. I swore to him that I had nothing except that garment at that time. I borrowed another garment to wear and ran to meet Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him). Groups of people congratulated me that my repentance had been accepted.

"When I entered the mosque, I greeted Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him) and his face was shining as if it was a piece of the full moon. He said to me: 'Rejoice Ka'b, this is the happiest day for you since you were born!'

"I said: 'O Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), is this good news from you or from Allah?'

"He said: 'No, it is from Allah.' Then he recited the verses that had been revealed. When I sat before him, I said: 'As Allah has accepted my repentance, I will give all my money in charity for Allah and His Messenger (Peace be upon him).'

"He said to me: 'It would be much better if you keep some for yourself.'

I said: "O Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), He only saved me because I told the truth, so I will only speak the truth till the end of my life."

Allah accepted the repentance of Ka'b (May Allah be please with him) and his two companions and revealed the following verse:

لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ
الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبُ
فَرِيقٍ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾
وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خُلِفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ
وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَن لَا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ
تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١١٨﴾

"Allah has forgiven the Prophet (Peace be upon him), the Muhajirun (Muslim emigrants who left their homes and came to Al-Madinah) and the Ansar (Muslims of Al-Madinah) who followed him (Muhammad (Peace be upon him)) in the time of distress (Tabuk expedition, etc.), after the hearts of a party of them had nearly deviated (from the Right Path), but He accepted their repentance. Certainly, He is unto them full of Kindness, Most Merciful. And (He did forgive also) the three [who did not join the Tabuk expedition (whom the Prophet (Peace be upon him))] left (i.e. he did not give his judgment in their case, and their case was suspended for Allah's Decision) till for them the earth, vast as it is, was straitened and their own selves were straitened to them, and they perceived that there is no fleeing from Allah, and no refuge but with Him. Then, He accepted their repentance that they might repent (unto Him). Verily, Allah is the One Who accepts repentance, Most Merciful"

Repent with Good Deeds

Allah (SWT) is not only pleased with those who repent and forgives them; He even replaces sins with good deeds.

Allah (SWT) says,

﴿وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا ﴿٦٨﴾ يُضَاعَفْ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَيَخْلُدْ فِيهِ مُهَكَّنًا ﴿٦٩﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٧٠﴾ وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا ﴿٧١﴾﴾

“And those who invoke not any other ilah (god) along with Allah, nor kill such life as Allah has forbidden, except for just cause, nor commit illegal sexual intercourse and whoever does this shall receive the punishment. The torment will be doubled to him on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein in disgrace. Except those who repent and believe (in Islamic Monotheism), and do righteous deeds, for those, Allah will change their sins into good deeds, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And whosoever repents and does righteous good deeds, then verily, he repents towards Allah with true repentance.” [Al-Furqan 25: 68-71]

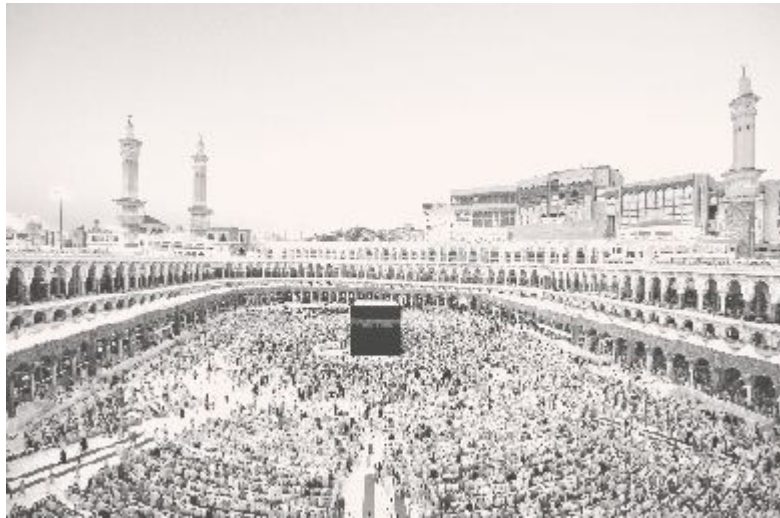
Al-Bukhari reports that Hakeem Ibn Hizaam (May Allah be please with him) went to Allah’s Messenger (Peace be upon him) and said:

“Before embracing Islam I used to do good deeds like giving in charity, manumitting slaves, and keeping good relations with kith and kin. Shall I be rewarded for those deeds? The Prophet (Peace be upon him) replied, 'You became Muslim with all those good deeds (without losing their reward).’” [Sahih Al-Bukhari, Hadeeth 1436]

Allahu Akbar! Sins are forgiven and bad deeds are replaced with good ones. The good deeds of people before they embrace Islam are also recorded. What a great religion!

Allah is the Oft-Returning, the Most Merciful but His forgiveness is for those who turn to Him. It is for the people who, when they commit a sin, ask for His forgiveness. And if they are reminded about Him, they remember Him. The greatest problem is not the sin itself, but that the person becomes accustomed to committing sins and does not seek repentance. Allah is Most Merciful towards His worshippers. His mercy is quicker than His wrath and His forgiveness is faster than His punishment. Allah is more merciful to His worshippers than their own parents.

Allah's Infinite Mercy



It is reported in the two authentic collections of Al-Bukhari and Muslim that after the Battle of Hawaazin, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) brought with him some Sabi (war prisoners, children and women) and gathered them together in one place. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) looked around and saw a woman stumbling around, looking for her lost child. She was completely distraught and had almost lost her reasoning. She searched frantically among the children, looking at their faces while her milk was overflowing. She was desperate to find her child among them; and would grab any crying child and breastfeed him.

While in this agitated state, she suddenly found her own child. She dried her tears, regained her composure, hugged him tightly and breastfed him.

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) looked at her and asked his Companions: "Do you think that this woman could throw her son into a fire?" The Companions were amazed and agreed that she could never do such a thing. How could she do that to the one who was most beloved to her heart, while she was breast feeding him and had the natural compassion and mercy of a mother?

They said: "O Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), she could not do so even if she were capable of doing so."

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) then said, "Allah is more merciful to His slaves than this woman is to her child."

Indeed, our Lord is more merciful to us than our parents. Part of His mercy is that He has opened the gate of mercy to everyone regardless of the person's sins, even if the person does not believe, transgresses, or oppresses.

Think of an old man with weak bones and a bent back. One day such a man came to Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him) while he was sitting with his Companions. The man was walking with difficulty, his eyebrows were drooping and he was leaning on a walking stick. He went up to Allah's Messenger (Peace be upon him) and said in a voice full of pain: "O Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), have you come across a man who has committed every possible sin? He has (done every) minor (and) major sin. If his sins were distributed among the inhabitants of the earth, it would cover them and lead to (their) destruction. If he repents, would his repentance be accepted?"

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) looked at him and realized he was an old man who was worn out by the passage of time and (whose) passions and desires had left him troubled and distressed.