

TEN WAYS TO AVOID THE HELLFIRE

AN EXCERPT FROM: MINHAAJ AS-SUNNAH

Written by Shaykhul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 720)

Translated by Hisham Assing



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In response to Ibn al-Muttahir's¹ false accusations and blatant lies regarding Uthmaan bin 'Affan, *radiyallaahu 'anhu*, alleged incompetency as the *Khalifah* of the Muslims. Shaykhul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah stated the following 10 ways by which a Muslim avoids the punishment of the Hellfire:

Chapter

The general principle that applies here is that we do not believe anyone is infallible² after the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). In fact it is quite

¹ He was a Shiite scholar who was a contemporary of Shaykhul-Islaam, and he was commonly known amongst the Shee'ah as 'al-'Allaamah'! He was born in Iraq in 648 and died 726 Hijree. This is just an excerpt from a four volume refutation by Ibn Taymiyyah in response to a book that was written by Ibn al-Muttahir inviting the King Khudabandah to convert to Shee'ism.

² Al-Haafidh (Ibn Hajr) said: "And the Prophets are infallible by consensus." *Fathul-Baari* 8/69
And Shaykhul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah said: "The statement that the Prophets are infallible from the *kabaa'ir* (major sins) but not the *sagaa'ir* (minor sins) is the statement of the majority of scholars of al-Islaam and all of the (different) groups to the point that it is (even) the statement of the people of *kalaam* (theological rhetoric) just as is mentioned by Abul-Hasan al-Aamadee that this is the statement of the majority of the Ash'arees. It is also the statement of most of the scholars of *tafseer* and *hadeeth* and the *fuqahaa* (jurists). Rather, it has not been reported from the *salaf* and the Imaams, the Companions, the *Tabi'een* and their followers anything except that which conforms with this statement." *Majmoo'ul-Fatawaa* 4/319

[Excerpted from the upcoming TROID Publication - *Enlightenment for the Mind in Explanation of: The Difference Between a Prophet and a Messenger* by Shaykh Muhammad al-Imaam – We ask Allaah to facilitate its printing]

possible for the *khulafaa* (Caliphs) and those other than them to make mistakes, however whatever sin they committed they would have repented from it, or it can be eradicated by their many good deeds, or they were tested by trials from Allaah whereby it becomes a means of expiation for their sins, or it can be expiated by other means. Hence everything that has been mentioned about 'Uthmaan, *radiyallaahu 'anhu*, at the very worst it can be said that it was either a sin or a mistake, but there were many things 'Uthmaan did and that happened to him that were reasons for his forgiveness; from amongst them: him being one of the first people to accept Islaam, his *eemaan*, his *jihad*, and his other acts of obedience. Indeed it has been authentically narrated that the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) gave him glad tidings of the *Jannah* due to a great trial that he would face later on in life. Also from amongst them (i.e. the reasons for his forgiveness) is that he repented from everything that they held against him, and that he was tested with such a severe trial that Allaah made it a means of expiating all his previous sins, to the point that he was martyred oppressively, and this is one of the greatest deeds that expiates a person's sins.³

Thus we do not say that none of them ever committed a sin (i.e. the *sahaabah*), rather we believe that those amongst them who committed sins, Allaah will not punish them in the hereafter, nor will He enter them into the Hellfire. In fact, they will enter into *Jannah* without a doubt, and they will be saved from the punishment of the hereafter either because of their repentance, their many good deeds, by an affliction that befell them, or because of other reasons which we clarified in other places. For indeed every sin that a believer commits is a reason for him being punished, however this punishment in the hereafter can be averted by ten different means:

1. ***at-Tawbah***: for indeed the one who repents from a sin is like the one who never committed that sin. And *tawbah* is accepted from every type of sin; *kufr*,⁴ wicked/evil deeds, and disobedience.

³ He is alluding to the *hadeeth* that is narrated by al-Bukhaaree from Abu Moosaa al-'Ash'aree whereby the said, "Let him enter and give him glad tidings of *al-Jannah* due to a trial that will afflict him." (3471)

⁴ [Editor's note] – This is referring to someone that was in a state of *kufr*, and then repented from that before death. The outright *kaafir*, i.e. Jew or Christian, will not be forgiven until he embraces Islaam as his/her religion.

Allaah says,

﴿ قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَنْتَهُوا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ وَإِنْ يَعُودُوا

فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّتُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴾

"Say to those who have disbelieved [that] if they cease, what has previously occurred will be forgiven for them."

[Sooratul-Anfal, 8:38]

He also says,

﴿ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ

وَنُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

"But if they repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, then they are your brothers in religion."

[Sooratut-Tawbah, 9:11]

Committing a sin then repenting from it often brings about an increase in fear, reverence, and humility for Allaah, which may not have previously occurred. This is why some of the *salaf* used to say; *a person may commit a sin because of which he enters Jannah, and a person may do a good deed by which he enters the hellfire*. He commits a sin which constantly weighs heavily on his conscious, thus whenever he remembers it he repents to Allaah and makes *du'aa* to Him and as a consequence He (Allaah) enters him into *Jannah*. Whereas the other does a good deed and becomes haughty because of it so he enters the hellfire.

2. *al-Istighfaar*, for indeed *al-Istighfaar* means to seek forgiveness which in reality is a form of *du'aa*, and most times it accompanies *tawbah*, as it is highly recommended to be part of it (i.e. *tawbah*). For indeed a person may repent but he may not make *du'aa*, or he may make *du'aa* but he may not repent. al-Bukhaaree and Muslim narrated from Abu Hurayrah, *radiyallaahu 'anhu*, who said the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) reported from his Lord (*hadeeth qudsee*) that He said, "My slave

commits sin, then he says, 'O Allaah, forgive me my sin!' Then Allaah says, 'My slave has committed a sin, but he knows that he has a Lord Who forgives sin and takes away sin. So I forgive my slave.' Then he commits sin again, and says, 'O Allaah, forgive me my sin.' Then Allaah says, 'My slave has committed a sin, but he knows that he has a Lord Who forgives sin and takes away sin. So I forgive my slave.' Then he commits sin again, and says, 'O Allaah, forgive me my sin.' Then Allaah says, 'My slave has committed a sin, but he knows that he has a Lord Who forgives sin and takes away sin. So I forgive My slave.'" In the narration of Muslim, "Let him do as he wants."⁵ Thus *tawbah* erases all bad deeds, and only by making *tawbah* can all sins be forgiven, for Allaah will not forgive shirk but He will forgive everything else besides that to those whom He chooses.

As He stated,

﴿ قُلْ يَاعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾

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

[Sooratuz-Zumar, 39:53]

As for simply making *istighfaar* without *tawbah*, then this does not necessitate forgiveness; but it can be a cause from its causes.

3. Good deeds, for verily Allaah said,

﴿ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ﴾

"Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds."

[Soorah Hood, 11:114]

⁵ al-Bukhaaree (7507) Muslim (2758)

And the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said to Mu'aadh Ibn Jabal advising him, "Yaa Mu'aadh fear Allaah wherever you may be, and follow a bad deed with a good deed which will wipe it away, and interact with the people in a good manner."⁶ He (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said, "The five prayers, the Jum'u'ah to Jum'u'ah, Ramadhaan to Ramadhaan; are all expiations for that which occurred between them as long as a person avoids the major sins."⁷ The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Whoever fasts during Ramadhaan out of *eemaan*, hoping to gain the reward therein; all his previous sins will be forgiven."⁸ The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Whoever performs Hajj to this House (Ka'bah) and does not approach his wife for sexual relations nor commits sins (while performing Hajj), he will come out as sinless as a newly born child."⁹ The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Charity extinguishes sins just as water extinguishes fire."¹⁰

Allaah says,

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا هَلْ أَذُكُمۡ عَلَىٰ تِحْرَةٍ تُنَجِّيكُمْ مِّنۢ عَذَابِ ٱلْأَلِيمِ ﴿١٠﴾ تُوْمِنُونَ
بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ ۖ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن
كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١﴾ يَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلِكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا ٱلْأَنْهَارُ
وَمَسَكِنٍ طَيِّبَةٍ فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلْفَوْزُ ٱلْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٢﴾ وَأُخْرَىٰ تُحِبُّونَهَا نَصْرٌ مِّن
ٱللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ ۖ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾﴾

"O you who have believed, shall I guide you to a transaction that will save you from a painful punishment? [It is that] you believe in Allah and His Messenger and strive in the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you, if you should know. He will forgive for you your sins and admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence. That is the great

⁶ Saheeh at-Tirmidhee (1987)

⁷ Muslim (233)

⁸ al-Bukhaaree (38)

⁹ al-Bukhaaree (2/133)

¹⁰ Saheeh at-Tirmidhee (6147)

attainment. And [you will obtain] another [favor] that you love victory from Allah and an imminent conquest; and give good tidings to the believers."

[Sooratus-Saff: 61:10-13]

Imaam Muslim narrated in his Saheeh, "All the sins of a *shaheed* (martyr) are forgiven except for his debt."¹¹ And many other *ahadeeth* that are like this, and to explain these *ahadeeth* would entail much further details. Perhaps a person may ask, "If the five daily prayers expiate the sins, then what sins are expiated whenever I pray Jumu'ah, or fast in Ramadhaan, 'Arafah, or 'Ashooraa?" Some people say that these acts increase a person's rank if there are no sins to expiate. However, what must be said first is that deeds that Allaah erases sins by and expiates bad deeds by, are the deeds that have been accepted, and Allaah indeed (only) accepts for those who have *taqwaa*. And regarding this ayah which is His statement,

﴿ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴾

"Indeed, Allaah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him]"

[Sooratul-Maaidah, 5:27]

the people have three opinions; two extremes and one that is in the middle. The *Khawarij*¹² and the *Mu'tazilah* say that Allaah only accepts the good deeds of those who avoid all the major sins, for according to them the person who commits a major sin, Allaah does not accept his good deeds period. The *Murji'ah* say as long as a person avoids *shirk* (all his good deeds will be accepted). Whereas the *Salaf* and the *A'immah* (Imaams) say: Allaah only accepts from the one who fears Him as it relates to that particular deed, as He commanded that it should be sincerely for His face.

al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyaadh said that about His statement:

﴿ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ﴾

"...That He might test you as to which of you is best in deed."

¹¹ Muslim (1886)

¹² <http://www.salafipublications.com/sps/sp.cfm?subsecID=GSC02&articleID=GSC020002&articlePages=1>

[Soorah Hood, 11:7]

"It is what is most sincere and most correct." They asked: "O Abu 'Alee', what is most sincere and most correct?" He replied: "An action, if it is sincere but not correct, will not be accepted. If it is correct but not sincere, it will [also] not be accepted; until it is both sincere and correct. Sincere means that it is exclusively for Allaah, and correct means that it conforms to the Sunnah." Thus the one who commits major sins, if he fears Allaah in that particular deed, it will be accepted from him, just as those who are better than him, if they do not have *taqwaa* of Allaah when doing that particular deed, it will not be accepted from them even though their other deeds may be accepted. Indeed Allaah accepts the deeds that are done in the manner they were commanded to be done as has been narrated in the *Sunan* from 'Ammar Ibn Yaasir that the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Indeed the 'abd (slave) would be distracted in his *salaah* to the extent that only half of it would be written for him, or a third of it, or a quarter of it, or a tenth of it."¹³ Ibn 'Abbaas said, "You have no reward from your *salaah* except that portion wherein you were conscious (of Allaah)." And the hadeeth, "Perhaps a fasting person will get nothing from his fast except hunger, and perhaps the one who stands to pray at night will get nothing from his standing except sleeplessness."¹⁴ Likewise the same applies to *Hajj*, *Jihaad*, and other acts of obedience. Thus the expiation of sins occurs when good deeds are accepted and most people are deficient when it comes to their good deeds; even in their *salaah*. In the *hadeeth* from Mu'aadh who narrated in the *Sunan*: "Jihaad is of two types; the *jihaad* whereby Allaah's face is sought, the *Ameer* is obeyed, the best of one's wealth is spent, you assist your comrade, evil is avoided, and the spoils of war are rightfully distributed. Nothing is equal to that. And the *jihaad* whereby Allaah's face is not sought (in another narration: showing off), the *Ameer* is not obeyed, the best of one's wealth is not spent, you do not assist your comrade, evil is not avoided, and the spoils of war is stolen before it is rightfully distributed. Then for such a person it is sufficient that he returns with nothing."¹⁵

¹³ Musnad Imaam Ahmad (18496). Shaykh al-Albaanee said it is *saheeh* (Prophet's Prayer: Arabic print pg. 36)

¹⁴ Saheeh ibn Maajah (hadeeth no. 1380)

¹⁵ Saheeh an-Nasaa'ee (hadeeth no. 3188)

Thus forgiveness and expiation occurs in relation that which is accepted from the good deeds, and most people are deficient in their good deeds - even in their *salaah* - for the best amongst them are those, who at the most, obtain half of the reward that is written for them, in addition to committing many sins. This is why the five *salaah* expiates some sins, *jumu'ah* expiates others, then fasting expiates some, and likewise other good deeds, for every good deed does not expiate every bad deed. Rather sometimes it expiates the minor sins, and other times it expiates the major sins, all based on the degree of a person's sincerity and truthfulness in relation to the gravity of the sin. al-Bukhaaree and Muslim narrated, "**A prostitute from the Children of Israa'eel saw a dog on a very hot day wandering around a well, sticking his tongue out because of thirst. So she took off her shoe and fed the dog some water with it, thus she was forgiven.**"¹⁶ So this woman - who fed the dog because of the sincere *eemaan* that was in her heart - was forgiven, for not everyone who feeds a dog would be forgiven. And verily deeds are multiplied in accordance with the level of *eemaan* and *ikhlaas* that is in the heart.

4. **The *du'aa* and the *istighfaar* of the Prophet** (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) for him during his (i.e. the Prophet's) life and after his death such as his intercession on the day of Judgment, for indeed they (i.e. the *sahaabah*) are the ones who are most likely to receive his intercession and his *du'aa* during his lifetime and after his death.
5. **The *du'aa* of the Muslims;** for indeed the prayers and the supplications for those who passed away is a reason for their forgiveness. And the Muslim up to this day continues to make *du'aa* for the *sahaabah*.
6. **The righteous deeds such as giving *sadaqah*, performing the hajj, and fasting; that is done on their behalf after they passed away.** For indeed it has been confirmed from authentic *ahaadeeth* that those deeds reach and benefits them, and this is besides the *du'aa* of his/her child, for they are from their actions. The Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "**Whenever the son of Adam dies all his deeds are cut off except from three (sources); recurring charity, beneficial knowledge, or a righteous child that makes *du'aa* for him.**"¹⁷ And the child is considered from his

¹⁶ al-Bukhaaree (1/128) and Muslim (3/1521)

¹⁷ Muslim (3/1255)

earnings, thus his *du'aa* (i.e. the child) is considered from his (i.e. the parent) actions, as opposed to the *du'aa* of other people for that is not considered from his actions, yet still Allaah allows it to be a means of benefit.

7. **The trials of this life by which Allaah expiates the sins** as in the authentic *hadeeth* from the Prophet (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), "**Never does a *Mu'min* experience pain, fatigue, stress, worry, sadness, or harm, except that Allaah expiates his sins by them.**"¹⁸ And this is something that has been mentioned in many *ahadeeth*, for the *sahaabah* may Allaah be pleased with them were tried with personal as well as general trials such as the *fitnah* that took place amongst them, even if not many of them were killed therein, but those who remained alive - some lost their family and their loved ones, some lost their wealth, some were injured, other lost power and authority, and other forms of trials. Thus all of these are means by which Allaah expiates the sins of the believers other than the *sahaabah*, so much less for them? And this is something that must happen.
8. **The trials a believer endures from the squeezing of the grave and the questioning of the two angels.**
9. **The overwhelming anxiety that will occur on the Day of Judgment.**
10. **From that which has been mentioned in al-Bukhaaree and Muslim that the believers would have to cross the *siraat* (bridge) whereby they would be stopped at a pass between the fire of Hell and the *Jannah* and thus they would engage in mutual retribution until they become pure and then they will be allowed to enter in *Jannah*.**

From: *Minhaaj as-Sunnah* (3/634-659)

Hisham Assing

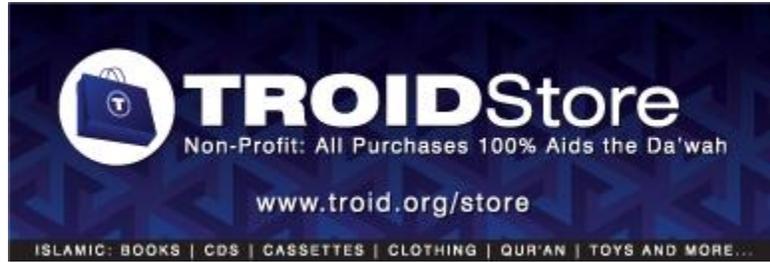
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¹⁸ Muslim (4/1992)

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