Regret

A police officer in a Muslim country wrote the following letter to a shaykh describing the events that led to his return to Allah. He recalls:

Seeing accidents and crash victims was a normal part of my day, but one incident was different.

My partner and I had parked on the shoulder of the highway and began to chat. In a random second, the scene shattered to the hideous sound of metal bodies becoming one. We threw our heads back to see what had happened. It was a head-on collision, the result of a vehicle slipping into the lane of the oncoming traffic.

We couldn’t describe the carnage. Two young men sprawled in the first car, both in critical condition. We carried them gently away from the car and rested them on the ground.

Quickly we returned to assist the owner of the second car. He was dead. Back we went to the two young men lying side by side on the pavement.

My partner began dictating the Shahaadah to them. "Say la ilaaha illAllah (There is no god but Allah), la ilaaha illAllah…"

Their tongues wouldn’t acknowledge it. They started humming the hypnotic lyrics of some song. I was terrified. My partner had experience however, and he kept repeating his instruction.

I stood up watching, no movement, eyes locked. Never in my life had I seen anything similar to what was going on before me. In fact, I’ve never actually seen someone die, and never, in such a satanic way.

My partner continued to instruct them to say the Shahaadah but there was no use. The hum of their song came to a slow silence, slowly. The first one stopped and then the other. Not a stir. Dead.

We carried them to our patrol car; my partner made no effort to speak. Not a whisper between us two as we carried the corpses to the nearest hospital.

PART II

Dear brothers, Ubayy Ibn Khalaf confronted RasulAllah sal Allaahu alayhi wa sallam one day with a rotted bone in his hand. He crushed it in his hands, let the wind blow it away and asked, "Muhammad, do you claim that Allah will bring these ashes to life?"

Allah replied to Ubayy and everyone else who dares ask the same question:

Has not man considered how We created him from a drop of semen? Yet he is an open adversary! He makes something up to be compared with Us and forgets how he was created. He says, "Who will revive [our] bones after they have rotted away? / Say: The one Who raised them up in the first place will revive them. He is aware of all creation (Ya-Seen 36/77-79).

Reflecting over the topic of this khutbah, I came across a website where readers submit stories of their biggest regrets. For some, it was a lost love, for others it was a job they passed up, and for still others, it was a flip of fate that ended in a horrific way.

But in all, the regrets were worldly candies that had been lost - short-lived pleasures of life. This is the world in which Allah decreed that summers always come to an end.

Those stories were of living beings recalling their regrets. However, what I would like to see is a website where the dead would recall their regrets! They would not regret the lost love, or the silly job or the twist of fate; they would regret every second that they did not spend worshiping Allah.

We are all here today because we claim that la ilaaha illAllah Muhammad ur RasulAllah is what we believe in. Nevertheless, the problem is that for many it is a belief that dropped its bags, sat down on the tongue, and did not move on to penetrate the heart.

There are many men and women of our deen for whom this was not the case. Muhammad Ibn Abi Imran narrates that he heard someone ask Shaykh Hatim al-Asum how he reached to his level of reliance upon Allah. Shaykh Hatim al-Asum replied, "I became convinced in four things (i.e. that these four things penetrated my heart). One, I am convinced that no one else will eat the provision Allah has decreed for me, so I am content. Two, I am convinced that no one else is going to do good works except me, so I am busy doing them myself. Three, I am certain death shall come unexpectedly, so I am busying myself in expectation of it. And four, I am certain I shall never escape the sight of Allah, so I am shy to disobey Him while He is watching."

Even though we all claim to believe what Hatim al-Asum is convinced of, how many of us have carried it past their tongue and allowed it a space in their hearts?

We all know what the media does to distort facts on the nightly news. They take a long speech, cut and paste, and take words out of context. Well, the media is not the only one that takes things out of context. Consider the following verse:

Say: My servants who have acted extravagantly against themselves still do not despair of Allah's mercy. Allah forgives all offences; He is the Forgiving, the Merciful (Az-Zumar 39/53).

So many of us have heard this verse out of context. It may seem like a human can do all the bad that they want, and when they die, they will go to Heaven. But read on.

And turn in repentance towards your Lord and commit yourselves peacefully to Him before torment comes to you; then you will not be supported. / Follow the finest part of whatever has been sent down to you from your Lord before torment comes upon you suddenly while you do not notice it / Lest some soul should say: Alas my grief that I was undutiful to Allah and I was indeed among those who scoffed [at the truth] (Az-Zumar 39/54-56).

This last verse is the proof that the Qur'an cannot be translated. How do you explain the grief of ya hasrataa? Imam At-Taahir Ibn Aashoor tries explaining hasrah as an extreme violent intoxicated regret. It is like a servant boy whose master charged him with the care of a flock. Thinking that the master was not watching, he slept and played, leaving the flock unattended. The flock went further and further away until a pack of wolves came and devoured every one. The regret is the regret that boy had to his master.

Yahya Ibn Mu'aadh rahimahullah said, "The most naïve thing in my eyes is to linger in sin - with no regrets - hoping for a far off pardon and to come closer to Allah without doing anything and to wait for the harvest of Jannah with the seeds of Hell - waiting for reward without any deeds."

PART III

The police officer that we mentioned earlier fell back into routine, as he narrates, and started to drift away from Allah. But another event happened to him that sealed the return. He continues:

What an odd world. After some time, about six months, a strange accident took place. A young man was moving along the highway normally, but within one of the tunnels leading to the city, he got a flat tire.

To the side of the tunnel he parked, and stepped to the back to remove the spare tire. The whistle of a speeding car could be heard from behind. In a second, it collided with the crippled car, with the young man in-between. He fell to the ground with critical injuries.

I rushed to the scene, myself and another partner other than the first. Together we carried the young man’s body into our patrol car and phoned the hospital to prepare for his arrival.

He was a young adult in his blossom years. Religious, as you could tell from his appearance. He was mumbling when we carried him, but in our rush, we had not paid attention to what he was saying.

However, when we placed him on his back in the patrol car, we could make it out. Through the pain, his heart was reciting Qur’an! He was so immersed in the recitation. Subhan Allah, you would have never said that this person was in intense pain.

Blood had soaked his clothes crimson red, his bones had clearly snapped in several places. To tell the truth, he looked like he was staring into the eyes of death.

He continued to read in his unique, tender voice, reciting each verse in proper rhythm. In my entire life, I had never heard any recitations like it. I said to myself, "I'm going to instruct him to say the Shahaadah just like I saw my friend doing,” especially since I had previous experience."

My partner and I listened intently to that soft voice. I felt a shiver shock my back and up my arm the hair stood.

Suddenly, the hymn ceased. I watched silently as his hand rose softly. He had his index finger pointed upward to the Heaven, saying the Shahaadah (La ilaaha illAllah – There is no God but Allah). Then, his head slumped.

I jumped to the back seat, felt his hand, his heart, his breathing. He was dead!

I couldn’t stop staring at him. A tear fell but I hid it in shame. I turned back to my partner and told him that the boy’s life had ceased. He burst out loud crying. Seeing a man cry like that, I could not control myself, and my partner faded away behind the fall of my own tears. The patrol car fogged from the emotions.

We arrived at the hospital. As we rushed through the corridors, we told all the doctors, nurses, and onlookers what had happened. So many people were affected by what we said, some stood there speechless and tearful.

No one wanted to lose sight of the boy, until they had been assured of the time and place he would be buried.

One of the hospital staffs phoned the boy’s home. His brother picked it up and was told of the accident. His brother told us about him:

He used to go out every Monday to visit his only grandmother outside of town. Whenever he visited her, he made sure to spend time with the poor children idling on the streets, and the orphans. The town knew him; he was the one that would bring them the Islamic books and tapes. His dusty Mazda would be filled with rice and sugar and even candies – couldn’t forget the candies – for those families who were in need.

He would not stand for anyone to discourage him from the long journey to that town. He would always politely reply that the long drive gave him time to review his Qur’an and to listen to Islamic lectures on his cassette deck and that with every step to the town, he hoped for the reward he would find with Allah.

PART IV

It is true brothers that Allah is Merciful and forgives and forgives, as He says:

Yet I am quite forgiving...

But to whom?

... towards anyone who turns [in repentance] and believes and acts honorable; then he will be guided (Taha 20/82).

Just like we reply someone's call when they phone us, this is Allah and His Messenger calling us:

O our people! Respond to Allah's caller (Muhammad sal Allahu alayhi wa sallam) and believe in him. Allah will forgive you of your sins and will save your from a painful torment (Al-Ahqaf 46/31).

Let us answer!

There is a verse in the Qur'an that when Shaytaan read it, he cried and felt regret. Read this verse, as it is the door to our happiness in this life and the next:

And those who, if they commit an immorality or wrong themselves, remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins – and who can forgive sins except Allah? – and who do not persist in what they have done while they know / For those, their reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens beneath which rivers flow [in Jannah], wherein they shall abide eternally. Excellent is the reward of the [righteous] workers (A’le-Imran 3/135-136).

Allah sent the Prophets and the Books; He sent the warnings and glad tidings; and He sent the reminders. And atop all that, Allah comes down to Samaa' ad-Dunya – in a way befitting of His Majesty – in the third portion of the night of every night, calling to every one of His servants, "Is there anyone who shall make du’a so that I shall accept His du’a? Is there anyone who shall ask for pardon so that I may pardon him?"