Praise be to Allah, the Lord of Creations, and Peace and blessings be upon our prophet Muhammad, the faithful and the honest.

Oh, Allah, we know nothing but what You teach us. You are the All-Knower, the Wise. Oh Allah, teach us what is good for us, and benefit us from what You taught us, and increase our knowledge. Show us the righteous things as righteous and help us to do them, and show us the bad things as bad and help us to keep away from them.

O Allah our Lord, lead us out from the depths of darkness and illusion, unto the lights of erudition and knowledge, and from the muddy shallows of lusts unto the heavens of Your Vicinity.

**Allah’s Beautiful Name: Al-Ghaffar:**

Our trip with Allah’s Beautiful Divine Names and Attributes is very long. So, we should have a short rest; and in our garden, as it were, is a blooming tall tree with many branches under which we shall have some shade with the ninth of Allah’s Beautiful Names, Al-Ghaffar, which comes in the Holy Quran under three forms, first of which is “Ghafir”. Allah, All-Mighty, says

“Ghafir-I-Thamb (the Forgiver of sin), the Acceptor of repentance, the Severe in punishment, the One Who Bestows (Favors). There is no god but He, to Him is the Final Return.”

[XL; 3]

The second form is “Al-Ghafour”, as in Allah’s Words

“And your Lord is Al-Ghafour (the Oft-Forgiving), the Owner of Mercy. Were He to call them to account for what they have earned, then surely, He would have hastened punishment for them; but they have their appointed time, from which they will find no escape.”

[XVIII; 58]

in His Words

“And He (Allah) is Al-Ghafour (the Oft-Forgiving), the Compassionate.”

[LXXXV; 14]

in His Words

“Declare (O Muhammad) unto My slaves that truly, I am Al-Ghafour (the Oft-Forgiving), the Most Merciful.”

[XV; 49]

and in His Words

“Say to My slaves who have transgressed against themselves: ‘Do not despair of Allah’s Mercy. Verily, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Al-Ghafour (the Oft-Forgiving), the Most Merciful.”

[XXXIX; 53]

among other Quranic Verses in which we read Allah’s Beautiful Name “Al-Ghafour”.

The third form of this Divine Name is “Al-Ghaﬀar” as in Allah’s Words
“And verily, I am Al-Ghaffar (the All-Forgiving) for him who repents, believes and does righteousness and is moreover rightly guided.”

[XX; 82]

in is Divine Words

“I said: ‘Ask forgiveness of your Lord, (for) verily, He is Ghaffar (All-Forgiving). He will send rain to you in abundance, and give you increase in wealth and children, and bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers.”

[LXXI; 10-12]

In short, “Ghafir”, “Ghafour” and “Ghaffar” are all used to the same purport in the Holy Quran, for they are derived from the same root, “Al-Maghfirah” (i.e. Forgiveness).

Some scholars said: “A person who disobeys Allah, All-Mighty, is described in the Holy Quran as being “Thalim”, “Thaloum” or “Thallam”. For example, Allah, Most Gracious, says

“Then We gave the Book (the Quran) as inheritance to such of Our slaves whom We chose. Then, of them are some who are Thalimun Lina fsih (i.e. wrong themselves), and of them are those who follow a middle course, and of them are some who are, by Allah's Leave, foremost in good deeds. That is indeed a great Grace.”

[XXXV; 32]

Another example is Allah's Words

“Truly, We did offer the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it. But man bore it; verily he was Thalouman (i.e. unjust to himself) and ignorant.”

[XXXIII; 72]

A third example is Allah's Words

“Say to My slaves who Asrafou (have transgressed) against themselves: ‘Do not despair of Allah’s Mercy. Verily, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

[XXXIX; 53]

Hence, Al-Musrif, as in the above Verses, means “Thallam” (i.e. someone who does a lot of injustice to himself, or wrongs himself).

If man is “Thalim” (i.e. a wrong-doer), Allah, Most Gracious, is “Ghafir” (i.e. the Forgiver); if man is “Thaloum” (i.e. does a lot of injustice to himself), Allah, Glory to Him, is “Ghafour” (i.e. the All-Forgiving); and if man is “Thallam” (frequently does wrong to himself), Allah, Most Merciful, is “Ghaffar” (i.e. the Oft-Forgiving). In other words, the way man commits sins or does wrong to himself determines the Way in which Allah, Most Gracious, responds and forgives such sins or wrong-doings.

The delicate point in this context is that man's sins and wrong-doings are by no means infinite, but Allah's Divine Forgiveness is really Infinite. Therefore, only those who disbelieve in Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, despair of His Infinite Divine Forgiveness! Only those who are ignorant despair of Allah's Infinite Divine Mercy! Only those who are ungrateful despair of Allah’s Infinite Divine Grace!

If your sin is finite but Allah’s Divine Forgiveness is Infinite, then it is most unwise, most ignorant, and most ungrateful to despair of Allah’s Infinite Divine Mercy. Therefore, a desperate person is an ignorant ungrateful disbeliever.

Another delicate point with regards to this Divine Name “Al-Ghaffar” is that the Verses in which this Name is
mentioned include verbs in the past form, as in Allah’s Words,

“He (David) said: ‘He has wronged you in demanding your ewe in addition to his ewes; and verily, many partners oppress one another, except those who believe and do righteous good deeds – and such are few.’ And David guessed that We have tried him and he sought Forgiveness of his Lord, and he fell down prostrate and turned (to Allah) in repentance. So, We forgave him that, and verily, for him is a near access to Us and a good place of (final) return (Paradise).”

[XXXVIII; 24,25]

They also include verbs in the present form, as in Allah’s Words

“Verily, Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him, but He forgives other than that to whom He wills. And whoever sets up partners with Allah has indeed invented a tremendous sin.”

[IV; 48]

and also

“And those who, when they have committed an evil deed or wronged themselves, they remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sins – and no one forgives sins but Allah – and do not persist on what they have done (of evil deeds) while they know...”

[III; 135]

They also come in the imperative form, as in Allah’s Words

“Our Lord! Verily, we have heard the call of one (Muhammad) calling to Faith: ‘Believe in your Lord’, and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and expiate from us our evil deeds, and make us die as pious and righteous.”

[III; 193]

They also come as verbs in the root form, as in Allah’s Words

“The Messenger (Muhammad) believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and so do believers: each one believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers, saying, ‘We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Ghufranaka (i.e. Your Forgiveness), our Lord! And to You is the Final Return.’”

[II; 185]

and

“They ask you to hasten the evil before the good, while (many) exemplary punishments have indeed occurred before them. But verily, your Lord is Full of Forgiveness to mankind in spite of their wrong-doing. And verily, your Lord is (also) Severe in punishment.”

[XIII; 6]

This means that Allah, Most Gracious, forgives you your previous, present and future sins, for He is the Oft-Forgiving. Whenever you commit sins, He is Oft-Forgiving. He, Most Gracious, also forgives all kinds of sins. In other words, for any sin or misdeed, He is the All-Forgiving. If you wrong yourself or others, He forgives you, but of course, after you have turned to Him with true repentance and sincere devotion. He, Most Merciful, forgives all kinds of sins everywhere and at all times, for He, Glory to Him, is the Oft-and-All-Forgiving, the Most...
Merciful.

In fact I say such words so that brother believers may not despair of Allah’s Infinite Divine Mercy, for only ignorant desperate disbelievers despair of Allah’s Infinite Divine Mercy.

Now the question is: why does this Divine Name come in such different forms? This is a very reasonable question.

The answer is: Linguistically speaking, such variation of word-forms of Allah’s Beautiful Name “Al-Ghaffar” denotes differences in both quantity, quality and frequency of occurrence, for Allah is Ghaffar in the sense that He is both Oft-Forgiving and All-Forgiving. In other words, whatever sins mankind commit, regardless of quality or quantity of such sins, or time or place of their occurrence, Allah forgives such sins, except for one unforgivable sin, namely associating other gods with Him in worship, which is by no means forgivable, as He, All-Mighty, says

“Verily, Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him, but He forgives other (sins) than that to whom He wills. And whoever sets up partners with Allah has indeed invented a tremendous (unforgivable) sin.”

[IV; 48]

In this context, Allah, Most Gracious, says

“Whosoever does deeds of righteousness, it is for (the benefit of) his own self; and whosoever does evil, it is against his own self. And your Lord is by no means unjust to His slaves.”

[XLI; 46]

In other words, Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, never does injustice to any of His slaves, all of whom enjoy being under His Infinite Divine Justice.

Another thing: Linguistically speaking, the Arabic word “Ghafara” means “to cover or hide”, but when Allah speaks about Moses, (PBUH)

“He (Moses) said: ‘My Lord! I have wronged myself, so forgive me!’ Then, He (Allah) forgave him. Verily, He is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

[XXVIII; 16]

and also about His Messenger, Muhammad, (PBUH)

“That Allah may forgive you your sins of the past and the future, and complete His Favor on you, and guide you on the Straight Path.”

[XLVIII; 2]

He, Glory to Him, means that He pardons and forgives, i.e. He, Most Gracious, does not punish His holy Prophets and Messengers but rather forgives them.

The problem is that when we read one part of the Holy Quran, we forget another. For example, when we read Allah’s Words

“Say to My slaves who have transgressed against themselves: ‘Do not despair of Allah’s Mercy. Verily, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is the All-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.’”

[XXXIX; 53]

Here, we should not stop but rather continue reading

“And turn you in repentance and in obedience with true Faith to your Lord and submit yourselves to Him before the Torment comes upon you, and then you will not be helped.”
In other words, Allah, is Ghafour (All-Forgiving) for those who turn to Him, for those who repent, for those who abstain from committing sins and misdeeds, for those who reform, for those who ask for Forgiveness, not for those who insist on their sins and misdeeds and never think of repenting from them, thinking, wrongly and naively, that Allah, All-Mighty, is Oft-and-All-Forgiving, Most Merciful. To this effect, Allah, Glorified and Exalted, says

“Declare (O Muhammad) unto My slaves that, truly, I am the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful, and that My Torment is indeed the most painful torment.”

[XV; 49,50]

In other words, either you come to Him willingly or He forces you to do so. To this effect, Allah, All-Mighty, Most Gracious, says

“Then, He (Allah) made them repent so that He may accept their repentance.”

and

“They repented (to Allah), and He accepted their repentance.”

This means that if sinners and wrong-doers do not repent willingly of their sins, Allah forces them to do so. To this effect, religious scholars say: “If a sinner delays his repentance to the Lord, All-Mighty, the Lord drives for him/her hardships and disasters that make him/her turn to the Lord with sincere repentance. A great many are those sinners who turn to the Lord with repentance after having been inflicted with a disaster or hardship.”

And when Allah, All-Mighty, said

“Leave Me, Alone, (to deal) with the one whom I, Alone, created and granted resources in abundance, and children to be by his side, and for whom I made life smooth and comfortable.”

[LXIV; 12-14]

He addressed His Messenger Muhammad, (PBUH): “O Muhammad! If so and so does not respond to you, leave him to Me! I shall drive to him hardships and disasters that will force him to repent to Me.” In fact, the above Verses are very delicate, for due to His Infinite Divine Mercy, Allah, Most Gracious, makes a gentle kind person give you a piece of advice in a gentle kind way supported by Quranic Verses and Prophetic Hadiths as well as stories and parables. But if you do not respond, Allah has other hard methods and treatments that drive you to His Door. So, which is better for you: to come to Him willingly and gently or by the stick?! In this context, Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), says

“Your Lord is amazed at some people who are driven to Paradise with chains. All of the children of Adam will enter Paradise except those who refuse to do so.” They asked, “And who refuses (to enter Paradise), o Messenger of Allah?!” “Those who obey me enter Paradise, but those who disobey me refuse to do so.” He, (PBUH), replied

The thing of which you have to be afraid most is that you are called to Allah, All-Mighty, Most Gracious, gently and kindly by a loving believing brother, who advises you to lower down your gaze, to make your income lawful, to shun transgression or injustice, to shun aggression, …etc, but you do not respond to such kind gentle call, and, therefore, Allah, All-Mighty, drives you hardships and disasters that cause you to repent to Him, i.e. He forces you to repent to Him:

“Then, He (Allah) made them repent so that He may accept their repentance.”

It is wise to repent to Allah willingly:
“They repented (to Allah), and He accepted their repentance.”

In fact, Allah is Full of Forgiveness. He is both All-Forgiving and Oft-Forgiving. In a Divine Hadith, Allah, Most Gracious, says

“O My slaves! I have forbidden injustice for Myself, and I have made it forbidden amongst yourselves; so, do not do injustice to one another! O My slaves! All of you are astray, except those for whom I provide Guidance; therefore, beseech Me for Guidance, and I shall provide you Guidance. O My slaves! All of you are hungry, except those for whom I provide sustenance; so, beseech Me for sustenance, and I shall provide you with sustenance. O My slaves! All of you are undressed, except those for whom I provide dresses; so, beseech Me for dresses, and I shall provide you with dresses... O My slaves! If the first and last from among you, and if the jinn and humans from among you, stood up in one line to beseech Me, and I gave each and every one of you whatever they may ask for, that would not take from that which I have except as much as a needle would take (water) from the ocean if it were dipped therein. O My slaves! It is only your deeds that I count for you in order to repay you for them; therefore, he who finds goodness should thank Allah, but he who finds otherwise should have only himself to blame.”

[Sahih Muslim]

The above Divine Hadith means that if man willingly turns to Allah in repentance, he guarantees Allah’s Protection, Honor and Support to himself. But if he refuses and fails to respond, he will be afflicted by torment from where he does not reckon. That is why our Lord, All-Mighty, says

“O you who believe! Answer Allah and the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life, and know that Allah comes in between a person and his heart, and verily, to Him you shall be gathered.”

[VIII; 24]

and

“O you who believe! What is the matter with you?! When you are asked to march forth in the Cause of Allah, you cling heavily to the earth! Are you pleased with the life of this present world rather than the Hereafter?! But little is the enjoyment of the life of this world as compared to the Hereafter. If you march not forth, He punishes you with a painful torment and replaces you by another people; and you can not harm Him at all, and Allah is Powerful over all things.”

[IX; 38,39]

If you do not come to Him, He drives you to His Door by force.

Some scholars said: “When once he turned to his Lord (in invocation), Allah’s Messenger, Muhammad, (PBUH), said, ‘O you (Allah), Who unveils that which is beautiful and veils that which is ugly!’

Just contemplate the above invocation: ‘O you (Allah), Who unveils that which is beautiful and veils that which is ugly!’ What does he mean by “ugly”? He means your evil thoughts, for lots of ugly thoughts visit man’s mind: thoughts of evil things, thoughts of committing sins. A thought that does not please the Lord, All-Mighty, may occur to you, but don’t you see that Allah, Praised and Glorified, covers all your evil thoughts and does not unveil them to other fellow humans. You may think of whatever things you like, and you may intend to do whatever you desire, nevertheless, you are respected by people, for Allah does not allow them to know your innermost thoughts and intentions unless you speak them out yourself. That is why some poets rightly said:

By Allah! If they knew my ugly thoughts,
Those who meet me would never greet me,
But rather they would turn away from me and get bored with my company.
If either partner were to know what goes on in the mind of the other, they would both break up. If a husband were to know what goes on in his wife’s mind, he would divorce her; and if she were to know what is in his mind, she would leave him. If a father were to know what goes on in his son’s mind concerning his death, he would hate him. Sometimes, a son says to his father: “O father! Give me your hand so that I kiss it!” But in his mind is another different thought. If the father were to know what is in his son’s mind, he would not only hate him but send him away as well. Yes, indeed! Allah, Most Gracious, is the Coverer, Who veils your evil thoughts and intentions from others. This is the meaning of the Prophet’s invocation:

“O you (Allah), Who unveils that which is beautiful and veils that which is ugly!”

Therefore, your innermost feelings, intentions, thoughts and ambitions are well-protected and well-covered. This is another meaning of Allah’s Beautiful Divine Name Al-Ghaffar, i.e. He keeps your innermost thoughts and intentions hidden from other fellow humans. Another meaning is that without an outer skin man’s body would look very ugly. In other words, man’s inner muscles and innermost parts would look horrible if they were on the surface of his body. But by Allah’s Grace, the outer skin makes man’s face and body look beautiful. This is another meaning of Allah’s Beautiful Divine Name Al-Ghaffar, i.e. He, Most Gracious, covers man’s ugly inner body with a nice-looking skin. This is also the meaning of the Prophet’s invocation:

“O you (Allah), Who unveils that which is beautiful and veils that which is ugly!” Also, Allah unveils man’s face, which is beautiful and veils his private parts, which are ugly"

A third meaning of Allah’s Beautiful Name Al-Ghaffar is that Allah, Most Gracious, veils a believer’s sins and misdeeds and does not show them. In other words, if a believer were to see the evil things that he formerly did when he was ignorant and heedless, he would get burnt of regret. When a believer turns to Allah with repentance, Allah forgives him his sins. But if he were to remember the evil things that he did in times of ignorance, he would bite his fingers of regret. Therefore, due to His Infinite Divine Mercy, Allah covers all the believer’s sins and misdeeds. This is, as some scholars say, the secret behind the decay of the human body upon death. The images are kept in man’s memory, and when the body perishes, there remains the soul, which is pure, holy and perfect because it is linked with Divine Perfection. When a true believer, who has previously committed sins and misdeeds, repents to Allah, what happens? If he were to remember his times of ignorance, the evil things that he has committed and the indecent conditions he has undergone, the lowly moral standard at which he has been, and the illogical intellectual condition in which he has been, he would get burnt of regret: his present perfection would burn him. This is in the present world, in which, as it is said, a believer is made to suffer humiliation, poverty or illness. But what is meant by humiliation? In fact, it is humiliation entailed by one’s former ignorance before one has repented to Allah, Most Gracious. This is because when man repents of his sins and misdeeds and is completely cured of them: if he were to remember such sins and misdeeds, he would get burnt of regret resulting from his previous carelessness and heedlessness. Therefore, due to His Infinite Divine Mercy upon believers in Paradise, Allah, Most Gracious, veils all their sins and misdeeds, so that neither they nor anyone else can see any of such sins or misdeeds. That is why Allah, Most Merciful, says

“The Forgiver of sin, the Acceptor of repentance, the Severe in punishment, the Bestower of Favors, there is no god but He, to Him is the Final Return.”

[XL; 3]

In interpretation of the above Quranic Verses, some scholars said: “Allah forgives sins out of His Bounty; He accepts repentance out of His Grace; He is Severe in punishing disbelievers; and He bestows His Favors upon those whom He loves.”

In the above Verses there are three of Allah’s Divine Names for believers and one Name for disbelievers. He is the Forgiver of sin, the Acceptor of repentance, the Bestower of Favors, the Severe in punishment. It is said that He is the Forgiver of sin for those who wrong themselves, the Acceptor of repentance for those who are lukewarm and follow a middle course, the Bestower of Favors for those who excel in good deeds. This is because some believers are negligent and commit sins, others are straightforward and honest, and some
others are excellent. Therefore, Allah, Most Gracious, is the Forifier of sin for negligent believers, the Acceptor of repentance for lukewarm believers, the Bestower of Favors for excellent believers, the Severe in punishment for disbelievers. But why is it only one Name for disbelievers? This is because Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), says

“Disbelief is but one and the same creed. So, beyond the Truth, what is there except Falsehood?”

In other words, disbelief is only one, but belief has ranks and degrees.

Scholars said: Consider Wahshi, who killed Hamzah, the Prophet’s venerable uncle and Companion. Do you believe that there could ever be a dirtier, uglier, more horrible, or more disgusting deed than what Wahshi, the slave, did in return to his emancipation? He killed Hamzah and stabbed his abdomen with his spear. After having killed Hamzah, he regretted his evil deed and flew away to At-Ta’if, a town near Mecca. Then, he sincerely wrote to Allah’s Messenger: “Is it possible for me to repent?” He was the one who killed one of the most beloved persons to Allah’s Messenger, Hamzah - and you can visit his tomb, dear reader, when you visit Medina, for it is near Mount Uhud. He wrote to Allah’s Messenger, “Is it possible for me to repent?” Therefore, Allah, Most Gracious, sent down this Verse:

“Verily, Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him (in worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills; and whoever sets up partners with Allah in worship has indeed invented a tremendous sin.”

[IV; 48]

Wahshi thought to himself, “I might not be included in Allah’s Will as mentioned in this Verse.” Therefore, Allah, Most Gracious, sent down:

“And those who invoke not any other gods along with Allah nor kill such person as Allah has forbidden, except for a just cause, nor commit illegal sexual intercourse – and whoever does this shall receive a (painful) punishment. The Torment shall be doubled to him on the Day of Resurrection, and he shall abide therein in disgrace, except for those who repent and believe and do righteous deeds: for those Allah shall change their sins into good deeds; and Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

[XXV; 68-70]

But Wahshi still thought to himself, “My work might not be righteous enough in the sight of Allah to accept my repentance.” So, Allah sent down:

“Say to My slaves who have transgressed against themselves (by committing sins): ‘Despair not of Allah’s Mercy! Verily, Allah forgives all sins!’”

In other words, even if you turn to Allah with sincere repentance from as many sins as would fill the heavens and the earth, Allah forgives you and does not care, for He, Most Merciful, is happier with His slave’s repentance than a lost one who finds his way, a barren father who suddenly has a baby, or a thirsty one who finds water.

We have some delicate points concerning the above Verse:

“Say to My slaves who have transgressed against themselves (by committing sins)”

In this Verse Allah, Most Gracious, does not say, “Say to My slaves who have committed sins and misdeeds, who have committed adultery, who have drunk wine, or who have committed genocide, …etc.” He, Most merciful, said

“Say to My slaves who have transgressed against themselves...”
which means that due to His Infinite Divine Mercy, Allah does not unveil the different grievous sins and misdeeds that sinners and wrong-doers have committed. He, Most Gracious, desires to cover them so that they may turn to Him with sincere repentance and faithful devotion.

Another delicate point is found in Allah’s Word

“My”

which denotes that Allah, Most Gracious, still affiliates such sinners and wrong-doers to Himself, i.e. He does not dismiss them from His Infinite Divine Mercy, but rather reassures them that He accepts their repentance if they turn to Him with sincere repentance. He also desires to comfort them and give them hope:

“Say to My slaves who have transgressed against themselves: ‘Despair not of Allah’s Mercy.’ …”

Therefore, they should be happy with Allah’s affiliating them to Himself, and they should love Him and hasten to turn to Him with true faith and sincere repentance. They should never despair of His Infinite Divine Mercy and Love for His slaves.

A third delicate point is that in the above Verse Allah does not say overtly,

“Say to My slaves who have transgressed against themselves by committing sins and misdeeds towards other fellow humans…”

because when they commit such sins and misdeeds and transgress against other fellow humans, they actually transgress against themselves, they actually do harm to their own selves. None could possibly do harm to Allah, All-Mighty, for His Divine Self is far Above being done harm to. To this effect, He, All-Mighty, says

“O My slaves! Even if the first and last, the jinn and humans, from among you, were as profligate as the most evil one from among you, that would by no means decrease a thing from My Kingdom.”

Hence

“Say to My slaves who have transgressed against themselves”

means that Allah’s Divine Self is far Above being done harm to, and

“Despair not of Allah’s Mercy! Verily, Allah forgives all sins. Verily, He is the All-and-Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

Means that whether you commit sins or not, and whether your sins are grievous or insignificant, it is His Infinite Divine Name and Attribute, everywhere and at all times, that He is Al-Ghaffour and Al-Ghaffar (the All-and-Oft-Forgiving).

As for Allah’s Words

“Declare unto My slaves that I am, truly I am, the All-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

[XV; 49]

scholars said that

Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), once passed by some of his Companions. Having noticed that they were laughing, he addressed them, “Are you laughing and the Fire is ahead of you!”, which made them very sad and depressed. Therefore, he, (PBUH), reassured them: “There has come to me Gabriel, (PBUH), revealing to me Allah’s Words ‘Declare unto My slaves that I am, truly I am, the All-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.’”
It is impossible for man to be in a good sound psychological state unless he combines equally both fear and hope in himself. If fear is stronger than hope, it is psychologically improper; and so is the case if hope is stronger than fear. Therefore, you have to be careful to keep both feelings in due balance. In the human blood there is a special hormone for coagulation and another for liquefaction. They should both be in a state of complete balance, otherwise human life would be impossible. If the first hormone overcame the second, blood would stagnate in the blood-vessels; and if the second overcame the first, man would bleed to death at the slightest wound. In your relationship with Allah, Most Gracious, All-Mighty, there should always be a kind of balance between both fear and hope. A great many people wrongly say, "Do not be so strict! Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful!" Such naïve kind of hope is foolish, for if you read the Holy Quran you quite often find that Allah, Glory to Him, says

"Then verily, your Lord - for those who do evil out of ignorance and afterward repent and do righteous deeds – verily, your Lord, thereafter, is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

[XVI; 119]

If you search for the Quranic Verses that have to do with the issue of Divine Forgiveness, you find a great many of them go like this:

“And those who committed evil deeds and then repented, afterwards, and believed, verily, your Lord, after all that, is indeed All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

[VII; 153]

In other words, hope without repentance and reform is a mere stupid kind of optimism; and fear to the degree of misery and utmost despair of Allah's Divine Mercy is nothing but deadly pessimism. You shall never be happy with Allah, Most Gracious, unless you combine both fear and hope. Allah, Most Merciful, All-Mighty, says

“And We answered his (Zechariah’s) call, and We granted him John and cured his wife (to bear a child) for him. Verily, they used to hasten to do good deeds, and they used to call upon Us with hope and fear and used to humble themselves before Us.”

[XXI; 90]

and

“Say: ‘Who rescues you from the darkness of the land and the sea (as) you call upon Him humbly and secretly, (saying), ‘If He (Allah) only saves us from this (danger), we shall truly be of those who are grateful.’”

[VI; 63]

Allah, Most Gracious, says

“Declare (O Muhammad) unto My slaves that I am, truly I am, the All-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

The Verse is addressed to Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), who is commanded to reassure sinners and wrong-doers that Allah is All-and-Oftt Forgiving and that He is Most Merciful. A Caliph was once visited by two of his grandsons, one was the son of his son and the other the son of his daughter. “Whose sons are you?” The Caliph asked. His daughter’s son affiliated himself to his own father, while his son’s son affiliated himself to the Caliph himself. So, the Caliph filled the lap of his son’s son with jewels, simply because he affiliated himself to him (i.e. the Caliph), while that of the daughter’s son with sweets. The lesson behind such story is that if man invokes his Lord: “O Allah! You are my Lord! There is no god but You! I have none but You!”, such invocation is sure to bring him nearer to the Lord, Most Gracious, as he affiliates himself to Him, All-Mighty. Therefore, Allah,
Most Merciful, honors you by affiliating you to Himself, as He says:

“Declare unto My slaves who have transgressed against themselves....”

That is why those who read the Holy Quran should deliberate how Allah affiliates mankind to Himself:

“Declare unto My slaves that I am, truly I am, the All-and-Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

Also, there is repetition of the words “I am” in order to reassure His slaves that He surely is the All-and-Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

Some scholars said: Allah’s Name “Al-Ghafir” means that He forgives you your sin in the sense that He obliterates it from the Scrolls of your deeds, His Name “Al-Ghafour” means that He obliterates your sins from the Records of the Scribes (i.e. Angels who record man’s deeds), and His Name “Al-Ghaффar” means that He makes you forget such sins altogether. It is most Generous of Allah that on the Day of Judgment, you find that all your sins and misdeeds have been obliterated altogether: from the Scrolls of your deeds, from the Records of the Angels, and from your own mind. That is why you are made to live in utmost never-ending Bliss in Allah’s Paradise, the breadth of which is the heavens and the earth.

It is wise that a sinner repents at a young age, but it is also alright if he/she repents at an old age, for Allah, Glory to Him, is Bounty Abounding. In this context, Allah, Most Gracious, says:

“O My slave! You have grown old, your back has grown bent, your sight has grown weak, and your hair has grown gray, so you should feel ashamed before Me, for I feel ashamed before you!”

The story that I like most and never forget speaks about an illiterate fifty-five-year-old man who admired a young Sheikh (religious scholar) and wished he could be like him. Remember in this context that Allah’s High Ranks are granted only to those who are truthful and sincere. Any way, the elderly man mounted his donkey and headed for Cairo, where Al-Azhar university is located. He spent years at Al-Azhar university studying the Holy Quran and disciplines of religious knowledge until he was ninety-nine. But he did not pass away until he had assumed the highest degree at Al-Azhar, Namely Seikh Al-Azhar (The Chief Scholar of Al-Azhar university). At the age of fifty-five, he turned to the Lord, Most Gracious, with sincere repentance and set off on his trip of study and education, which he achieved most successfully. Every now and then, he used to invoke his Lord: “O Allah! I have been late in coming to You! I have been very late! ...”. But due to Allah's Grace, he was not too late!

If man repents to the Lord, Most Gracious, and tastes sweetness of such repentance, he says, “My heart is burning with regret for the great many years that I have spent in disobedience to Allah!” In other words, after having tried the taste of purity, the taste of intimacy with Allah, the taste of turning to Allah, the taste of righteous work, the taste of knowledge, and the taste of honor, man says, “I wish I had known Allah before this age!” That venerable scholar of Al-Azhar university used to invoke the Lord: “O Lord! I have been late in coming to you!” But Allah, Most Gracious, inspired him: “O My slave! Do not say that! Verily, those who are late in coming to Me are those who pass away before they repent of their sins!” This means that if you still have only one day to survive, you can repent to the Lord. So long as your heart is still beating, there is great hope. But the sooner the better.

Now, the question is: What is our relationship with Allah’s Beautiful Name Al-Ghaffar (the All-and-Oft-Forgiving)? The answer is: Allah, Most Gracious, is Al-Ghaffar (the Oft-and-All-Forgiving)! And you, as a human being, can’t you forget mistakes of other fellow humans?! Don’t you forgive them?!

Scholars said: A believer’s share of this Name is that he should cover mistakes of other fellow humans, believers and non-believers, just as Allah covers his own mistakes. Such is the first and foremost thing a believer has to do towards Allah’s Beautiful Divine Name Al-Ghaffar (the Oft-and-All-Forgiving).

At the time of the venerable Companion and Caliph Omar bin Al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, a woman committed adultery. After having been punished, she repented sincerely. Later on, a man came propose
to her for marriage. Her brother came to Omar, saying, “O Commander of the Faithful! A man has come to propose to my sister for marriage. Shall I inform him about her previous sin and punishment?” Omar, may Allah be pleased with him, said angrily: “If you had informed him, I would have killed you! Allah, Most Gracious, has covered her! Do you want to uncover her?!”

Therefore, if you, as a true believer, know that a friend of yours has committed a sin or a misdeed, you should cover it for him. You should never mention it to any other person if you are a true believer who believes in Allah’s Name Al-Ghaffar (the Oft-and-All-Forgiving). Just as Allah, Al-Ghaffar, has forgiven you your sins and misdeeds and accepted your repentance, you should forgive your friends and cover their mistakes. In this context, Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), says

“A sin is a misfortune for others than the one who has committed it, for if they speak about it, they slander him.”

If a friend of yours commits a sin and you speak about it to the others, you slander him. If you blame him for it, you will be made to commit the same sin. And if you accept such a sin from him, you share with him the state of being sinful. If we are informed that a friend of ours has earned some money unlawfully, it is enough to say: “Well done! He has done this for a better living.” to be as sinful as he is. Praising such a wrong-doer and trying to justify his evil deed makes us as sinful as he is; blaming him for committing such unlawful earning of money makes us fall in the same trap; and speaking about his sin to others means that we slander him. All of this happens to those who have not committed the sin, so what about the one who has committed it?!

A person who overlooks other people’s mistakes is a noble bounteous person. So, always try to be a positive person. Always try to mention other people’s merits. While dealing with other people, try to overlook their faults and shortcomings and highlight their merits and good deeds if you really want them to love you. Unfortunately, some people are always inclined to forget all of the good things of others.

In the same context, Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), says

“O Allah! I take refuge with You from an evil neighbor who: if he sees something good, he conceals it; but if he sees something evil, he reveals it. O Allah! I take refuge with You from an evil Imam (leader) who: If you do something good, he does not accept it; but if you do something bad, he does not forgive (it).”

It is indeed most horrible to conceal people’s merits and reveal their demerits. Therefore, a true believer is someone who overlooks people’s faults and shortcomings and highlights their good deeds. In this context, Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), says

“Honor is helpful.”

If you have a son whom you know is trustworthy, try to praise him for being trustworthy. Some fathers are so critical about their sons, and they underestimate their work. Doesn’t your son have a merit?! Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), was once asked, “O Allah’s Messenger! What saves man from the Fire?” He, (PBUH), replied, “Belief in Allah.” “Should there be any work together with belief?” He, (PBUH), was asked. “He should give from that which Allah has given him.” He, (PBUH), answered. “What if he does not have anything to give?” He, (PBUH), was asked. “He should help a helpless person.” He, (PBUH), replied. “What if he can not?” He, (PBUH), was asked. “He should bid for a good thing.” He, (PBUH), answered. “What if he can not do (that) well?” He, (PBUH), was asked. “Don’t you wish to leave for your fellow one good thing?!” He, (PBUH), asked.

No human being is deprived of all merits. If you have an employee who is a little negligent but honest, try to tell him: “I am pleased with your honesty.” A man entered upon Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), while he was performing prayer. Being very careful to catch up with Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), and his venerable Companions in prayer, the man made much noise and disturbance and spoiled their prayer. Allah’s Messenger did nothing but gently addressed the man:

“May Allah make you more careful! Do not do that again.”
In other words, he, (PBUH), praised the man’s carefulness to catch up with Allah’s Messenger and his venerable Companions in prayer and bade him gently not to do that again.

Ibn ‘Abbad, one of the Princes of Andalus (ancient Muslim Spain), was a poet. One day, in the garden of his palace, he began composing a verse saying, “The breeze has spread on the water Zarad (Chains of which an armor is made).”, but he could not complete the verse. A maid of his, who was standing behind him, completed the verse saying, “What a strong armor it would be if it got frozen!” The prince greatly admired her maid and got married to her. Later on, he became king of Andalus and lived happily with her. One day, she desired to remember former days of poverty. She wanted to walk on mud, so he brought musk and camphor, mixed them with rose-water and said: “Here is some mud for you to walk on!” Days went by and someone called Ibn Tashifeen came from Africa to defeat all the kings of Andalus and put them all in jail. When things became so bad for Ibn ‘Abbad, his wife, who had previously been a maid of his and upon whom he had bestowed a great honor by making her a queen, reproached him saying, “I have never seen anything good of you!” He reminded her, “Not even the day of the mud?!”

If you have a wife, do not always blame her. If you have a son, do not always reproach him. Doesn’t he have any merits?! If you keep reproaching him, you destroy him. Doesn’t your wife have any merits?! Isn’t she chaste and noble?! When you leave home for work, aren’t you sure of her chastity and honesty?! A true believer does not forget merits of other people. On one of his battles against the infidels of Mecca, namely Badr Expedition, Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), saw ‘Ikrimah, his daughter’s husband, among the captives. ‘Ikrimah had come with the infidels of Mecca to fight against his father-in-law, Allah’s Messenger, Muhammad, (PBUH), who did not forget that he was his son-in-law, but praised him saying

“By Allah! We have never known him to be a bad son-in-law!”

and set him free.

The best and most noble thing for you with Allah is to be fair to other fellow humans around you. If you have a wife, children, brothers, neighbors, friends, subordinates, employees, …etc, whose merits you know quite well, try, every now and then, to praise them for such merits. If you do, they will love you and accept your advice and even criticism. Remember what Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), said to the man who made great disturbance in the mosque, as above mentioned:

“May Allah make you more careful! Do not do that again.”

As a true believer, you should be fair to others. There is an amazing story in this context: When ‘Ikrimah Ibn Abu Jahl came to declare his conversion to Islam, what did Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), say?! He, (PBUH), addressed his venerable Companions:

“Here comes ‘Ikrimah to declare his conversion to Islam. Never speak badly of his father!”

But who was ‘Ikrimah’s father?! His father was Abu Jahl, one of Allah’s Messenger’s worst enemies. However, Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH), went on saying

“This is because speaking badly of the dead injures the living but does not reach the dead.”

As a true believer, you should always highlight merits of others and cover their demerits. Hunting for mistakes and shortcomings of other fellow humans is by no means a believer’s job.

One day, the holy Prophet Jesus, (PBUH), came past a stinking decaying cadaver – and I don’t think there is in the whole world, anything that looks or smells more horrible than a stinking decaying cadaver. His companions said “How horrible it smells!” He, (PBUH), said: “Do not say that, but rather say: ‘How white and beautiful its teeth are!’ Maybe, the lesson we get from such wise words of the holy Prophet, Jesus, (PBUH), is that you can never be a good father, a good teacher, a good preacher, a good merchant, a good factory or hospital director unless you know merits of those who work with you and appreciate and highlight such merits.
Once you have done that, you may expect them to accept your advice. If, however, you forget or neglect such merits, and if you hunt for mistakes and shortcomings, they will surely turn away from you.

Anyway, this is all I can say about Allah’s Beautiful Divine Name “Al-Ghaffar”; and I pray to Allah for success. As dear readers know, no one can ever know the reality of Allah except Allah Himself. In this lecture I mentioned some Quranic Verses and Prophetic Haiths that have to do with this Divine Name, “Al-Ghaffar”, which should always motivate us all to ask Him for forgiveness, for He, glory to Him, is the All-and-Oft-Forgiving.

“O Allah! You are All-and-Oft-Forgiving, Most Generous! You like to forgive, so forgive us, o You, Most Generous!” This was one of the most favorite supplications of Allah’s Messenger, (PBUH). Therefore, we should always supplicate Allah with it.

Translation: Khaled Al-Athmeh
Auditing: