289765 - Conditions of Repentance

the question

Is repentance without regret for past sin valid? What is meant by this stipulation that regret should accompany repentance?

Summary of answer

The conditions of sincere repentance are:
1- Giving up the sin;
2- Regretting what has happened in the past;
3- Resolving not to go back to it;
4- Seeking forgiveness from the one who was wronged, or giving him his rights.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Conditions of repentance

The conditions of sincere repentance are:

1. Giving up the sin
2. Regretting what has happened in the past
3. Resolving not to go back to it. If one is repenting from wronging others with regard to their wealth, honour or physical wellbeing, then there is a fourth condition, which is:

1. Seeking forgiveness from the one who was wronged, or giving him his rights.

Allah, may He be exalted, has commanded His slaves to repent sincerely, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

{O you who have believed, repent to Allah with sincere repentance. Perhaps your Lord will remove from you your misdeeds and admit you into gardens beneath which rivers flow [on] the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him. Their light will proceed before them and on their right; they will say, “Our Lord, perfect for us our light and forgive us. Indeed, You are over all things competent”.} [At-Tahrim 66:8]

What is sincere repentance?

Al-Baghawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“[The scholars] differed concerning its meaning.

- `Umar and Abu Mu‘adh said: Sincere repentance means repenting then never going back to the sin, just as milk never goes back into the udder.
- Al-Hasan said: It means that the person regrets what he did in the past, and is determined not to go back to it.
- Al-Kalbi said: It means that he seeks forgiveness verbally, regrets it in his heart, and restrains himself from wrongful actions.
- Sa‘id ibn Al-Musayyab said: It is repentance which benefits you.
- Al-Qurazi said: It combines four things: seeking forgiveness verbally, giving up the [sinful] physical actions, resolving in one’s heart not to go back to the sin, and keeping away from bad company."(*Tafsir Al-Baghawi* 8/169).

Regret is the cornerstone of repentance

Regret is an important condition of repentance , or it is the cornerstone of repentance. It was narrated that ‘Abdullah ibn Ma‘qil ibn Muqarrin said: My father was with ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud and heard him say:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “Regret is repentance.” (Narrated by Ahmad (4012); classed as sahih by al-Albani.)

One of the scholars said:

In order to repent , it is sufficient to feel true regret, which leads to giving up the sin and resolving not to go back to it, for they both stem from regret and are not to be regarded as conditions alongside regret. (See: *Fath al-Bari,* 13/471)

Al-Qari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Regret is repentance” because it leads to the other essential parts thereof, namely giving up the sin, resolving not to go back to it, and restoring people’s rights wherever possible…

What is meant is regret for having committed the sin because it is a sin, not for any other reason." (*Mirqat al-Mafatih* 4/1637).

If this regret is sincere, then the sinner will give up the sin and resolve not to do it again. Thus his repentance will be complete and will fulfil all the necessary conditions.

How to achieve regret in your heart

There are things which will help the person to achieve regret in his heart :

- Coming to know Allah after having been ignorant of Him

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{The repentance accepted by Allah is only for those who do wrong in ignorance [or carelessness] and then repent soon after. It is those to whom Allah will turn in forgiveness, and Allah is ever Knowing and Wise

But repentance is not [Accepted] of those who [continue to] do evil deeds up until, when death comes to one of them, he says, “Indeed, I have repented now,” or of those who die while they are disbelievers. For them We have prepared a painful punishment} [An-Nisa’ 4:17-18]

Mujahid said regarding the words {those who do wrong in ignorance [or carelessness]}: “Everyone

who disobeys his Lord is ignorant, until he gives up his sin." (*as-Sahih al-Masbur fi't-Tafsir bi'l-Ma'thur,* 2/19)

- Remembering Allah after having been heedless of Him

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous

Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good -

And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], 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.} [Al 'Imran 3:133-136]

'Ali ibn Abi Talib said:

"Abu Bakr told me, and Abu Bakr spoke the truth; he said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say:

"There is no man who commits a sin, then gets up and purifies himself, then prays, then asks Allah for forgiveness, but Allah will forgive him."

Then he recited this verse:

{And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], 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.} [Al 'Imran 3:136]" (Narrated by Abu Dawud (1521), At-Tirmidhi (406) and Ibn Majah (1395); classed as sahih by Al-Albani in *Sahih Al-Jami'* , 5738)

- Fear of the plan of Allah after having felt safe from it

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Do they think that what We extend to them of wealth and children

Is [because] We hasten for them good things? Rather, they do not perceive.

Indeed, they who are apprehensive from fear of their Lord

And they who believe in the signs of their Lord

And they who do not associate anything with their Lord

And they who give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord,

It is those who hasten to good deeds, and they outstrip [others] therein.} [Al-Mu'minun 23:55-61]

- Hope for Allah's mercy after having despaired of it

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{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."

And return [in repentance] to your Lord and submit to Him before the punishment comes upon you; then you will not be helped.

And follow the best of what was revealed to you from your Lord before the punishment comes upon you suddenly while you do not perceive.} [Az-Zumar 39:53-55]

It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that there were some of the polytheists who had killed and killed a great deal, and had committed zina and done it a great deal. They came to Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and said: What you are saying and calling to is good, if only you could tell us that there is any expiation for what we have

done.

Then the verse was revealed:

{And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse.} [Al-Furqan 25:68]

And the words were revealed:

{Say, "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah} [Az-Zumar 39:53]" (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 4810, and Muslim, 122)

Benefits of regret

As for the outcomes of regret, they are four:

- Constantly feeling sorrow and regret in the heart for having committed the sin.

Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

"The believer thinks of his sins as if he is sitting beneath a mountain and fears that it may fall on him, whereas the evildoer thinks of his sins like flies that pass in front of his nose, and he gestured like this. Abu Yusuf gestured with his hand in front of his nose. (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 6308)

The opposite of that is that he rejoices if he is able to commit that sin and has the opportunity to do it again. It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said:

Your rejoicing over the sin if you have the opportunity to do it is more grievous than the sin, and your feeling sorrow regarding the sin if you miss the opportunity to do it is more grievous than the sin. (Narrated by Abu Nu'aym in al-Hilyah, 1/324)

- Wishing never to go back to the sin; rather he would hate to go back to the sin after Allah has pardoned him for it, as he would hate to be thrown into the fire.

It was narrated from Anas that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

“There are three characteristics, whoever attains them has found the sweetness of faith: when Allah and His Messenger are dearer to him than all else, when he loves a man and does not love him except for the sake of Allah, and when he would hate to return to disbelief after Allah has saved him from it as he would hate to be thrown into the fire.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 6941, and Muslim, 43)

The opposite of that is that he seeks out the sin, and seeks out the places and times for committing it, those who commit it and the means of committing it. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning:

{But there came after them successors who neglected prayer and pursued desires; so they are going to meet evil,

Except those who repent, believe and do righteousness; for those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged at all.} [Maryam 19:59-60]

- Giving up the sin

Continuing in the sin will render repentance null and void. This indicates that repentance was not truly heartfelt.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim said:

What I think regarding this issue is that repentance from a sin is not valid if one persists in another sin of the same type. As for repenting from one sin whilst committing another that has no connection to it, and is not of the same type, that is valid, such as if a person has repented from riba but has not repented from drinking alcohol, for example. His repentance from riba is valid.

But if he has repented from riba al-fadl [when similar commodities are exchanged unequally, such as one measure of dates for two measures of a different quality of dates] but has not repented from riba an-nasi’ah [when the amount of debt is increased when the debtor is unable to pay off the debt at the appointed time and requests extra time in which to pay it off], and he is still persisting in it, or vice versa, or he has repented from consuming hashish but is persisting in

drinking alcohol, or vice versa, then in this case his repentance is not valid.

This is like one who repents from committing zina with one woman, but he is persisting in committing zina with another woman, and is not repenting from that; or he repents from drinking intoxicating grape juice [wine], but he is persisting in drinking other intoxicating drinks. In reality, he has not repented from the sin; rather he has turned from one type thereof to another type.

And he is unlike the one who has turned away from one kind of sin to a sin of a different type." (*Madarij As-Salikin* 1/285).

- Resolving not to go back to the sin

If he goes back to it, then this undermines the perfection and benefit of his repentance, but it does not render it invalid or mean that it is wrong in principle.

It says in *al-Mawsu'ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaitiyyah* (14/123):

"In the case of repentance, it is not stipulated that the individual should not go back to the sin from which he has repented, according to most of the jurists.

Rather repentance depends on giving up the sin, regretting it, and firmly resolving not to go back to it.

But if he goes back to it despite his resolve at the time when he repented, he becomes like one who committed the sin for the first time, and his previous repentance is not rendered invalid, and the burden of the sin that was removed by means of repentance is not added to his record again, for it has become as if it never happened. This is what is stated in the hadith: "The one who repents from sin is like one who did not commit sin."

Some of the scholars said that the burden of the first sin is re-added to his record, because repenting from sin is like entering Islam after having been a disbeliever. If the disbeliever becomes a Muslim, his Islam erases what came before it of the sin of disbelief and everything connected to it, but if he apostatizes, his previous sins are re-added to his record, when he apostatizes.

In fact, not going back to the sin and adhering to repentance are necessary conditions of his repentance being perfect and the benefit thereof being perfect, but they are not necessary conditions of his previous repentance being valid.”

Benefits of resolving not to go back to sin

The outcomes of this resolve not to go back to the sin are four:

- Closing the door to sin

This means avoiding all people and all means that may lead to you disobeying Allah, may He be exalted. It was narrated from Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri that he heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “Do not keep company with anyone but a believer and do not let anyone eat your food but one who fears Allah.” (Narrated by Abu Dawud (4832) and At-Tirmidhi (2395); classed as hasan by Al-Albani.)

- Barring the means that lead to sin

This means avoiding dubious matters and everything that may lead to falling into that which is haram. It was narrated that an-Nu‘man ibn Bashir said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say – and an-Nu‘man pointed to his ears with his fingers –:

“That which is halal is clear and that which is haram is clear, and between them are doubtful matters which many people do not know. Whoever avoids the doubtful matters will have protected his faith and his honour, but whoever falls into the doubtful matters will fall into haram, like a shepherd who grazes his flock around a sanctuary and soon will transgress upon it. Every king has a sanctuary and the sanctuary of Allah is His sacred limits. In the body there is a piece of flesh which, if it is sound, the entire body will be sound, but if it is corrupt, the entire body will be corrupt. Verily it is the heart.” (Narrated by al-Bukhari, 52, and Muslim, 1599)

- Doing the opposite of the sin

The repentance of the one who withheld knowledge is by explaining what Allah has revealed, and

the repentance of the hypocrite cannot be valid unless he becomes sincere in his devotion to Allah.

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Repentance from sin means doing the opposite.

Hence Allah, may He be exalted, stipulated that the repentance of those who concealed what Allah had revealed of clear proofs and guidance should include disclosing it and explaining it to people. Because of what their sin had involved of withholding knowledge, their repentance from that required them to make it evident. Allah, may He be exalted, said (interpretation of the meaning):

{Indeed, those who conceal what We sent down of clear proofs and guidance after We made it clear for the people in the Scripture - those are cursed by Allah and cursed by those who curse,

Except for those who repent and correct themselves and make evident [what they concealed] Those - I will accept their repentance, and I am the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.} [Al-Baqarah 2:159-160]

In the case of a hypocrite’s repentance, it is stipulated that he should become sincere in his devotion to Allah, because his sin was showing off. Allah, may He be exalted, stated that the hypocrites would be in the lowest depths of the Fire [An-Nisa’ 4:145], then He said:

{Except for those who repent, correct themselves, hold fast to Allah , and are sincere in their religion for Allah , for those will be with the believers. And Allah is going to give the believers a great reward} [An-Nisa’ 4:146]” *(Madarij As-Salikin* 1/370)

- Opening the way to doing righteous deeds and adhering to obedience to Allah.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{But indeed, I am the Perpetual Forgiver of whoever repents and believes and does righteousness and then continues in guidance.} [Ta-Ha 20:82]

Ibn ‘Ashur (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “What is meant by guidance here is persisting in following guidance and remaining steadfast therein. This is like the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Indeed, those who have said, "Our Lord is Allah ," and then remained on a right course - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.} [Al-Ahqaf 46:13] (A*t-Tahrir wa’t-Tanwir* 16/276)

Thus it becomes clear that regret is very important in a person’s repentance, and that it is fundamental to returning to the Lord of the Worlds and shunning the temptations of the devils.

We ask Allah to enable us to repent sincerely and to bless us by accepting our repentance.