

DUĀ' FOR A

D E C E A S E D

D I S B E L I E V E R



Du'ā for a Deceased Disbeliever

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Part 3

Ibn Taymīyyah رحمه الله تعالى mentioned a rule and he said,

وهي أن جميع ما يحتاج به المبطل من الأدلة شرعية وعقلية إنما تدل على الحق لا تدل على قول المبطل

When you analyze the proof, whether it's Shar'i or intellect, that the people of falsehood bring, it's proof for the Haqq, not for them, and it can be used and turned against them.

They use the verse,

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

And My Mercy encompasses all things.

To include a Kāfir in the Rahmah of the Ākhirah, the verse itself responded to them the following statement,

فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ

So I will decree it [especially] for those who fear Me

ما من دليل صحيح يحتاج به المبطل الا وفي نفس الدليل رد عليه

Every proof that the people of falsehood bring has to have, within it, proof against them.

The verse,

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

is precisely and delicately worded. It's like, for example, if someone says, "*I have a huge library, I wrote in my will that these books are going to Hamzah.*" How many books are going to Hamzah? *All* the books. You don't understand from the way I worded it that *some* are going to Hamzah and some are going to 'Abdullāh. Delicately worded by علام الغيوب, "My mercy encompasses all, but I'm only giving it to:

لِلَّذِينَ يَتَقَوَّنُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الْزَكْوَةَ

The believers. That verse started with

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

My mercy encompasses all

and the ending of it is

وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِإِيمَانِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

and those who believe in Our verses...

Those who believe in my Āyāt. Using that verse the way they used it, as I said, it's like someone saying there's no more Salāh because Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى said,

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُهَذِّبِينَ

So woe to those who pray...

and stops, and doesn't say "The one who are mindless of their prayer, or delay their prayer". Or like someone who says:

يَعُذِّبُهَا اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرُبُوا الصَّلَاةَ

O you who have believed, do not approach prayer

and stops there. He forgets about,

وَأَنْتُمْ سَكَرَى

While you are intoxicated

"Oh you who believe do not approach prayer." They stop there and leave out the next statement, "While you are drunk".

Now the next invention that they did to their false 'Aqīdah is distinguishing between Istighfār and Rahmah as it pertains to a deceased Kāfir. According to them, there's a difference between Istighfār and Rahmah in the matter of a person who died on Kufr. They said the Rahmah of Allāh in the Ākhirah encompasses the Kuffār, so we can make Du'ā of Rahmah, but we can't give you Istighfār. The Ulama' did discuss the differences in the meanings between Rahmah and Istighfār, and 'Afwu along with that, but not in the context of including a deceased Kāfir and the Rahmah of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى and the Ākhirah, and

that context has never been mentioned in the past 14 centuries. But why would they make this new invention? Istighfār has more clear proof and more direct proof than Rahmah as it pertains to a deceased Kāfir, like,

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولَئِيْ قُرْبَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَخْبَتُ الْجَنَّمَ

It is not for the Prophet and those who have believed to ask forgiveness for the polytheists, even if they were relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of Hellfire.

And there's other proof, clear and direct. So they said, *"How are we going to battle this one out? We can't do the deception we did with the proof, so let's try something new."* They said, *"Let's make a distinction between Istighfār and Rahmah and say, Istighfār you can't do for the deceased Kāfir, but Rahmah, yes."* Quickly going over the terms, 'Afwu is forgiveness and erasing of sins and shortcomings with no punishment. Maghfirah is to cover them up, to cover the faults and sins. The helmet that they used to wear during battle back in the day was called Al-Mighfar. Why was it called Al-Mighfar? Because it covers the head. Al-Mighfar, so Maghfirah is to cover the faults and sins. Rahmah is broader than all that. On top of the forgiveness, it's Ihsān and goodness to that person, like entry to Jannah. It's an addition over Maghfirah.

وَرَبُّكَ الْفَغُورُ ذُو الْرَّحْمَةِ

And your Lord is the Forgiving, the possessor of mercy.

Rahmah is more blessings on top of the forgiveness, more Hasanāt, and more forgiveness. At-Tabari رَحْمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى said, *"Rahmah is to be saved and spared from your punishment because no one is saved from punishment without the mercy of Allāh."* Abu Hayyān سَبَّانَهُ وَتَعَالَى said, *"It's to save one from the horror of Yawm Al-Qiyāmah."* The bottom line is it's broader than Maghfirah, Rahmah is broader than Maghfirah. They're all mentioned in the beautiful verse and Du'ā — and all the Qur'ān's verses and Du'ās are beautiful — but this one should be ripe

on the tongue of the Muwahhidīn because it's encompassing to Rahmah, 'Afwu, and Maghfirah, and a Du'ā deeply needed against the Kuffār:

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذنَا إِن نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَلْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحِمِّلْنَا إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحِمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكُفَّارِينَ

Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people.

Between Rahmah and Maghfirah is تلازم and not تطابق, Rahmah and Maghfirah are not identical but they're linked together, some of their meanings overlap each other. They're inseparable, they're intertwined. Look at the many verses in the Qur'ān:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Verily Allāh forgives all sins. He's the All-forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَاسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

Ask Allāh for his forgiveness. Allāh is the All-forgiving, Most Merciful.

أُولَئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

They hope for Allāh's mercy and Allāh is the All-forgiving, Most Merciful.

Istighfār and Rahmah are correlative. There is تلازم between Istighfār and Rahmah. Making Tarahhum on a deceased Kāfir is also asking Allāh سبحانه وتعالى to give him from the nature matter of the Maghfirah of Allāh. When you ask Rahmah for a dead person, it means, "O Allāh, forgive his sins and allow him entry into Jannah, and save him from Jahannam." Rahmah encompasses meanings they're asking for deceased Kuffār that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى made Harām upon them, and that's transgression in Du'ā. So the first response is, Maghfirah and Rahmah may be slightly different, yes, but there's تلازم between them, meaning they require and entail and necessitate each other. They're intertwined. Their meanings overlap.

Now the next response is to look at Rahmah when it comes in the context of the Ākhirah, in the verses of the Qur'ān.

يَوْمَ تُبَيِّنُ وُجُوهٌ وَسُودٌ وُجُوهٌ فَمَا الَّذِينَ أَسْوَدُتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكْفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ إِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ

On that Day, some faces will be bright while others gloomy. To the gloomy-faced it will be said, "Did you disbelieve after having believed? So taste the punishment for your disbelief."

That's one category. The next category is:

وَمَا الَّذِينَ أَبْيَضْتُ وُجُوهَهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

As for the bright-faced, they will be in Allāh's mercy, where they will remain forever.

After mentioning the gloomy faced will be punished, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى then mentions the opposite, those whose faces will become radiant and shining, and they're where? In Allāh's Mercy, فِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ. Punishment is mentioned, then the opposite of it is mentioned, and Allāh said they're in His Rahmah. What is Rahmah here? Ibn Kathīr رَحْمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى said, "Rahmah in this verse is Jannah, Allāh referred to His Rahmah in the Ākhirah as the Jannah." So, when somebody dies and you're asking for Rahmah upon them, you're really asking Jannah

for them and to be, of course, saved from Jahannam. There are many verses similar to that — numerous.

وَقِهْمُ الْسَّيِّئَاتِ وَمَنْ تَقَىُ الْسَّيِّئَاتِ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

And protect them from evil deeds. Whoever you save from punishment, you have taken into mercy.

The opposite of punishment here is Rahmah and Rahmah here is Jannah, as Al-Qurtubi رحمه الله تعالى said, and it's confirmed by the end of the verse,

وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

That is the supreme, ultimate success.

Allāh defines Rahmah in that verse as being saved from punishment. So if you made Du'ā for Rahmah according to that verse, you're doing what? You're asking that he or she be saved from punishment, and of course, granted Jannah.

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

Say, "Indeed I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day."

مَنْ يُصْرَفُ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ

Whoever saved and spared and averted from the torment on that day Allāh has been merciful to him and that is the Ultimate, Supreme Success.

What's the meaning of Rahmah in this verse? You've attained the Rahmah of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى by being saved from Jahannam. So when someone is making Du'ā of Rahmah, they're

making Du'ā to avert that deceased from Jahannam and torment. These are verses, among others, that show Rahmah comes, as it pertains to the Ākhirah, to be Jannah or being saved from punishment in Jahannam. Jannah is Harām upon a Kāfir in the Ākhirah, so you can't make that Du'ā because Jahannam is their abode.

A third response: Do you know if the Messenger ﷺ or any Sahābi or any reputable Imām did Tarahhum and Istighfār on a Kāfir after they died? Even their closest relatives? Look at the verses deterring from Istighfār to the Kuffār who died on their Kufr, deterring from Istighfār for a deceased Kāfir.

أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

Ask forgiveness for them, [O Muḥammad], or do not ask forgiveness for them. If you should ask forgiveness for them seventy times - never will Allāh forgive them. That is because they disbelieved in Allāh and His Messenger, and Allāh does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.

Another verse,

وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّا تَأْبِدًا وَلَا تَقْمِ عَلَى قَبْرِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ فَسِقُونَ

And do not pray [the funeral prayer, O Muḥammad], over any of them who has died - ever - or stand at his grave. Indeed, they disbelieved in Allāh and His Messenger and died while they were defiantly disobedient.

Another verse,

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولَئِكُو قُرْبَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ

It is not for the Prophet and those who have believed to ask forgiveness for the polytheists, even if they were relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of Hellfire.

The Messenger ﷺ, in the Hadīth that I mentioned earlier, sought permission from Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى to seek forgiveness for his mother, but it wasn't granted. But visiting her grave was granted. [We now have] this new 2022 Tawhīdic discovery they made to distinguish between Tarahhum and Istighfār for a deceased Kāfir. Now, something as essential as this, deeply needed — wouldn't Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى soothe the heart of his Messenger ﷺ saying, "You're denied from making Istighfār to your mother, but go ahead and do Tarahhum on her and visit her grave"? This was something extremely moving to the Messenger ﷺ within Hadīth itself. It was reported by Abu Hurayrah, in that same Hadīth, when the Messenger ﷺ was standing over his mother's grave, he wept and caused everyone around him to weep. Not only was it an essential matter to the Messenger ﷺ, but many of the Sahābah had close, immediate relatives who died on Kufr. Wouldn't the Messenger ﷺ be informed of something so essential for him, and the Sahābah? He was never taught that or allowed to do that, and if he was, he would've taught us and we would've been informed of it.

A fourth point is you need to keep in mind that Rahmah is of two types. There's general rahmah, رَحْمَةٌ عَامَةٌ. It's in the Dunyā for the Kuffār. In Sūrat Ghāfir, the angels — the Bearers of the Throne — say,

رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا

Rabbanā! You encompass everything in Your Mercy and in Your Knowledge.

This is general Rahmah and it includes the Rahmah of a Kāfir in the Dunyā. The verse combined between Allāh's Rahmah and Knowledge, so whatever His knowledge encompasses, His Mercy encompasses, and that's everything. That is specific to this Dunyā — clothing them, sheltering them, food they get, marriages, wealth, sending them a messenger — that is among their Rahmah in the Dunyā.

The second type of Rahmah is the special Rahmah, رحمة خاصة, that is mentioned in the verse we took earlier:

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

My Mercy encompasses all...

وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا

And ever is He, to the believers, Merciful.

This Rahmah is just for a believer. Granting them blessings, patience, guiding them, and granting them Yaqīn and steadfastness on their Tawhīd, protecting them, giving them victory, making their life good even with difficulties,

وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهُ

And whoever believes in Allāh - He will guide his heart.

And forgiving their sins. This is both in Dunyā and Ākhirah for a believer. In the Ākhirah, for the believer, is also to pardon their mistakes, to cover their sins, to grant them entry to Jannah and to save them from Jahannam, and to save them from the horror of the Judgment Day. That Dunyā Rahmah for the Kuffār is for the Dunyā, and it's a test, and it may be a means for them to enter Jahannam if they don't believe. Sending a messenger for them in this Dunyā is a Rahmah for them. If they don't accept it, if they reject it, it's a means for them to enter Jahannam.

Allāh gives the Dunyā to those He loves, and those He doesn't love. He gives the Tawhīd to those whom He loves. Giving good in this Dunyā is not a measure [of Allāh's

Love] and it's not [given] because Allāh سبحانه وتعالى loves one. Otherwise the Messengers عليهم الصلاة والسلام would be the most hated. Messengers were the most tested in this Dunyā, and they're in the peak of Jannah. Fir'awn had a kingdom, wealth, and prestige, and Qārūn was given wealth, and they're in the pit bottom of Jahannam. The health of the Kuffār, when they inhale and exhale, their wealth, their children — all that is Rahmah in Dunyā for them. Sending them messengers is Rahmah for them in this Dunyā, giving them time to repent throughout their life is Rahmah for them in this Dunyā, and it may be a means for them to enter Jahannam if they do not believe.

فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَعْذِبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَزَهَّقُ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَفَرُونَ

So let not their wealth or their children impress you. Allāh only intends to punish them through them in worldly life and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers.

وَنَبِلُوكُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَأَنْخِبِرْ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ

And We test you with [the] bad and [the] good (as) a trial; and to Us you will be returned.

We test you all through the good and the bad. And Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said,

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا أَءَاتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ فَلَمَّا رَأَاهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَلْوَنِي أَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرْ

But the one who had knowledge of the Scripture said, "I can bring it to you in the blink of an eye." So when Solomon saw it placed before him, he exclaimed, "This is by the grace of my Lord to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful..."

Sulayman عليه الصلاة والسلام, a prophet, said about his kingdom, "This by the Grace of my Lord to test me whether I'm grateful or ungrateful." Allāh is merciful, but He has the quality of Al-'Adl (the Just). In the Hadīth,

فَنَ يَعْدِلُ إِذَا لَمْ يَعْدِلِ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ؟

Who will do justice if Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and His Messenger ﷺ do not?

And it's from His Justice that He doesn't treat a Kāfir and Muslim alike, and He's the One Who says and gives the standards of what's just and what's not.

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ أَجْتَرُهُوا الْسَّيِّئَاتِ أَنَّنَجَلَّهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً مَحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

Or do those who commit evils think We will make them like those who have believed and done righteous deeds - [make them] equal in their life and their death?1 Evil is that which they judge [i.e., assume].

In Sūrat Al-Jāthiyah Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said,

أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفَجَارِ

Or should We treat those who believe and do righteous deeds like corrupters in the land? Or should We treat those who fear Allāh like the wicked?

In Sūrat Sād:

أَفَجَعَلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ

Then will We treat the Muslims like the criminals?

مَا كُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ

What is [the matter] with you? How do you judge?

You can't make an analogy and say Allāh سبحانه وتعالى gave them Rahmah in this Dunyā so they'll get Rahmah in the Ākhirah. In Dunyā, they have Rahmah, but that Rahmah is temporary to this Dunyā and it's a test that turns into punishment, if they don't believe. It's a Rahmah and it turns into 'Adl in the Ākhirah.

This leads to their next Shubhah, a third Shubhah that was presented to me. They argue that we make Du'ā of Rahmah not for their entry into Jannah, but for lessening their punishment in Jahannam. You misunderstood us. We're with you, they're gonna be in Jahannam, yes, but we're making Du'ā of Rahmah to lessen their punishment in Jahannam. Why do you say this? They said it's because the level of Abu Tālib was lessened so the Rahmah of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى will benefit Kuffār in the Ākhirah by lessening their punishment like Abu Tālib. So they say, *"It's not what you think. It's not Du'ā for Jannah or to take them out of Jahannam, it's just to lessen their punishment."* That's one of their newly discovered arguments. What I mentioned earlier applies here as well and responds to this Shubhah that they made. Did they learn something Allāh سبحانه وتعالى didn't teach His Messenger ﷺ when he asked about making Du'ā for his mother? Allāh سبحانه وتعالى could have told him to do Tarahhum on his mother and inform the Sahābah to do that as well, and that Tarahhum you do for your mother and your relatives is to lessen their punishment. Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله تعالى in Al-Bidāyah wan-Nihāyah, in the fourth volume said,

ولولا ما نهانا الله عنه من الاستغفار للمسركيين لاستغفرونا لأبي طالب وترجمنا عليه

Had Allāh سبحانه وتعالى not denied us from making Istighfār to Mushrikin we would have made Istighfār to Abu Tālib and did Tarahhum upon him.

Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله تعالى is saying if there was one Mushrik who died on Shirk, who was worthy of Tarahhum and Istighfār, it would be Abu Tālib, but we're not allowed to do that for Abu Tālib. And he specifically mentioned Istighfār and Tarrahum and that it is not allowed for Abu Tālib, meaning *let alone anyone else*. The verses I mentioned earlier show that Rahmah in the Ākhirah comes in the context of Jannah and being saved from

Jahannam. All that — Jannah and being saved from Jahannam — is Harām upon a Kāfir, so that's transgression in Du'ā. That's the first point to the third Shubhah.

There's a Hadīth they use that's in Sahīh Al-Bukhārī, Al-'Abbās Ibn 'Abd Al-Muttalib asked the Messenger,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، هَلْ نَفَعَ أَبَا طَالِبٍ شَيْءٌ؟ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ يَحُوْطُكَ وَيَغْضُبُ لَكَ

O Messenger of Allāh! Have you benefited Abu Tālib in any way? He used to always defend you and was fervent in your defense.

The Messenger ﷺ said he is in the most shallow part of Jahannam.

قَالَ: نَعَمْ، هُوَ فِي حَضَاجٍ مِنْ نَارٍ، وَلَوْلَا أَنَّكَانَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ

He is in a shallow fire, and if it wasn't for me, he would have been in the pit bottom of Jahannam.

In another narration he said his punishment is that he's placed in the shallow part of Jahannam, which would reach his ankles and his brain would boil from it. In another narration, he said Abu Tālib has the least punishment in Jahannam. He would be wearing two shoes of fire which would boil his brain.

أَهُونُ أَهُلَّ النَّارِ عَذَابًا أَبُو طَالِبٍ وَهُوَ مُنْتَعِلٌ بِنَعْلَيْنِ يَغْلِي مِنْهُمَا دِمَاغُهُ

Among the inhabitants of the Fire, Abu Tālib would have the least suffering, and he would be wearing two shoes (of Fire) which would boil his brain.

نَسَأَلَ اللَّهُ السَّلَامَةَ وَالْعَافِيَةَ. There are other similar narrations. Their point is if the punishment of the non-believer, Abu Tālib, is lessened, that means we can make Du'ā of Rahmah to non-believers, which entails lessening their punishment. That can be responded to in many ways. Look at this Hadith in Sunan An-Nasā'i, Sunan Abu Dāwūd, and Musnad Ahmad. 'Ali went to the Messenger ﷺ and said,

قَلَّتْ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّ عَمَّكَ الشَّيْخَ الصَّالِّ قد مات

Your paternal uncle, the old, misguided man, has died.

'Ali رضي الله عنه is talking about his own father after he died. Walā' and Barā'. Walā' and Barā'! The man Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله تعالى said [about] that if there was one man that was worthy of Istighfār and Tarahhum who died on Kufr, it would be him, because of his support for his nephew of course. The Messenger ﷺ said,

اذْهَبْ فَوَارِ أَبَاكَ ، ثُمَّ لَا تُحْدِثْ شَيْئًا ، حَتَّى تَأْتِيَنِي

Go bury your father, then don't do anything after that until you come and speak to me.

فَذَهَبْ فَوَارِيْتُهُ وَجِئْتُهُ فَأَمَرْنِي فَاغْتَسَلْ وَدَعَا لِي

I buried him and then I went to the Messenger ﷺ. He said to perform Ghusl and he made Du'ā for me.

'Ali رضي الله عنه said the Messenger ﷺ made Du'ā for me. Who really needs the Du'ā? The man who's about to be questioned by the angels or a man living and serving and believing in the Messenger ﷺ and defending him? The Messenger ﷺ could have made Du'ā for both. It was the proper timing to make Du'ā for both. Abu Tālib, who is moments from being questioned or possibly at the precise time of being questioned, yet the Messenger ﷺ didn't do Du'ā for him, rather he only made Du'ā for 'Ali. Wouldn't that be a proper timing to

make Du'ā for Abu Tālib, who would the most worthy of the Kuffār to make Du'ā for if it was permissible?

The next response in the lessening of the punishment goes back to learning the intercession, the special Shafā'ah of RasūlAllāh ﷺ. There are 3 categories. The first one is the Greater Intercession, when he will intercede for all mankind, when Allāh سبحانه وتعالى delays the Reckoning. The Day that the creation will be in distress and anxiety, to the point they can no longer bear it, and the Messenger ﷺ will intercede, so Allāh سبحانه وتعالى will pass the judgment among the creation.

عَسَىٰ أَن يَعْثُكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا

It is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.

The second one is the Shafā'ah for the people of Jannah to enter Jannah. They don't enter Jannah except after Shafā'ah. The third, special Shafā'ah for the Messenger ﷺ is for his uncle, Abu Tālib. That Shafā'ah is specific for him and for his punishment to be lessened. In Bukhāri and Muslim, the Messenger ﷺ said,

لَعَلَهُ تَنْفَعُهُ شَفَاعَتِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

Perhaps my intercession will be of benefit for him on the Judgment Day.

It's a special one. The Ulamā' categorized three different types of Shafā'ah that are special for the Messenger ﷺ and that's one of them. In Sahīh Muslim,

يَا عَمَّ، قُلْ "لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ" ، كَلِمَةُ أَشْهَدُ لَكَ بِهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

The Messenger ﷺ told his uncle to say لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ on his death bed.

فَقَالَ أَبُو جَهْلٍ وَعَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي أُمِّيَّةَ: يَا أَبَا طَالِبٍ أَتَرَغَبُ عَنْ مِلَّةِ عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ

Abu Talib, you abandoned the religion of 'Abd Al-Muttalib?

Abu Tālib gave his final decision and stuck with the religion of 'Abd Al-Muttalib and he refused to profess لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ. The Messenger said, “I will persistently beg pardon for you unless I'm forbidden.” And then the verse was revealed after that.

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولَئِكُنَّ قُرْبَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّمِ

It is not for the Prophet and those who have believed to ask forgiveness for the polytheists, even if they were relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of Hellfire.

A side note: even though it appears from the Hadīth that the verse was revealed pertaining to Abu Tālib, it is actually disputed among the Ulamā' because the verse is in Sūrat At-Tawbah and that was revealed in Madīnah. Abu Tālib died way before that in Makkah. There's numerous explanations to that, which will take us off topic, but what matters here is the meaning of the verse. It's clear. No Istighfār for the Mushrikīn. The Shafā'ah to lessen the punishment of Abu Tālib is a special Shafā'ah, from three angles, special in three different ways: special in that it's from the Messenger ﷺ, special in that it's only for Abu Tālib, and special in that it is only to lessen his punishment. Because Allāh سبحانه وتعالى said

the broad guideline is

فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّفِعِينَ

So there will not benefit them the intercession of[any] intercessors.

No Shafā'ah will benefit them. This is an exception. In Sahīh Muslim, Ā'ishah asked the Messenger ﷺ,

ان ابن جدعان كان في الجاهلية يصل الرحم، ويطعم المسكين، فهل ذاك نافعه؟ قال: لا ينفعه، إنه لم يقل يوماً:

رب اغفر لي خطئي يوم الدين

Ā'ishah asked the Messenger ﷺ about Ibn Jud'ān. This proves that it's a special situation. In Jāhiliyyah, he established ties with his relationship and he fed the poor, he did a lot of good. Would that be of benefit for him? The Messenger said it would have no avail to him because he never said "Yā Allāh! Pardon my sins on the Day of Resurrection", so it was a specialty.

فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ

So there will not benefit them the intercession of[any] intercessors.

That's the guideline, that's the rule. The Kuffār will not benefit of the Shafā'ah and they will be destined to eternal Jahannam, as Ibn Kathīr said in the Tafsīr of the Āyah,

فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ

So there will not benefit them the intercession of[any] intercessors.

There's no Shafā'ah to a Kāfir on Yawm Al-Qiyāmah. However, the Shafā'ah to Abu Tālib was an exception to him and the specialty to the Messenger ﷺ. [It was an] exception, Khās, extracted from

فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الْشَّفِيعِينَ

So there will not benefit them the intercession of[any] intercessors.