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Indeed all Praises are for Allah alone. We praise Him, seek His assistance, and seek His forgiveness. And we seek refuge in Him from the evil of our own selves and the evil consequences of our actions. Whomever Allah guides, there is no one to lead him astray, and whomever is lead astray, there is no guide for him. I testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, who is alone without any partner, and I testify that Muhammad is His slave and final messenger. To proceed:

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Is the Price of Paradise Good Deeds?

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How often have you heard that Islam is a deed based religion and that Muslims "buy" their way into paradise with righteous actions? This claim, often held by many seeking to attack Islam, is an attempt to deny Allah's perfect mercy and forgiveness displaying Islam as unforgiving, overly strict, and an oppressive religion while highlighting their own as one of compassion, love, and mercy. A similar view is also held by a deviant sect of Muslims, who believe that Allah has made a promise, which He is bound by; to enter the believers into paradise in exchange for their righteous deeds therefore implying everlasting life therein is not linked to Allah's eternal mercy and grace but a simple transaction or exchange. Without a shadow of doubt, Islam requires its followers to conform to Allah's divine legislation, partaking in that which is righteous and abandoning that which is evil, as an apparent display of one's inner faith, but is it as some have claimed, "a

pass" "into Gardens under which rivers flow"?

Al-Hafith Abdur-Rahman ibn Ahmed ibn Rajab (d. 795 H) has said the following in a concise treatise clarifying this issue; Imam al-Bukhari (may Allah have mercy on him), in his as-Sahih, reported a tradition on the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) in which the prophet (salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam) said, "none of you will be saved by his/her actions". His companions replied and said, "Not even you messenger of Allah?" and he (salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam) said, "not even me, unless Allah envelopes me in His mercy. Therefore, do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and worship Allah in the morning, the afternoon and during a part of the night, and always adopt a middle, moderate, regular course so you can reach your target (Paradise)." He, al-Bukhari, also reported in another chapter of his book that the prophet (salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam) said, "The religion of Islam is easy and

whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way so adopt a middle, moderate, regular course and try to achieve perfection in order to receive glad tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings and the nights." Likewise he reported, from the traditions narrated by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), that the prophet (salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam) said, "Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately so that you may receive glad tidings because one's good deeds will not make him enter Paradise." They asked, "Even you, messenger of Allah?" He said, "Even I, unless and until Allah envelops me with His pardon and Mercy" and "Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately and know that your deeds will not make you enter Paradise, and that the most beloved deeds to Allah are the most regular and constant even if they were few." These prophetic traditions embody a very great and important principle and

from them branch various issues including the manners and behavior one adopts in their path to Allah the Most High. This principle; the individual's actions do not save him from the fire or enter him into paradise but rather all of that occurs by the forgiveness and mercy of Allah has been demonstrated in the Quran in many verses such as, "...so those who emigrated and were driven out from their homes, and suffered harm in My Cause, and who fought, and were killed (in My Cause), verily, I will remit from them their evil deeds and admit them into Gardens under which rivers flow (in Paradise)..." (Aali Imran 3:195), "Their Lord gives them glad tidings of a Mercy from Him, and that He is pleased (with them), and of Gardens (Paradise) for them wherein are everlasting delights." (At-Tawbah 9:21), and, "That you believe in Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him), and that you strive hard and fight in the Cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives, that will be better for you, if you but know! (If you do so) He will forgive you your sins, and admit you into Gardens under which rivers flow..." (As-Saff 61:11, 12)

So the link between entering paradise and salvation from the fire and the forgiveness and the mercy (of Allah) substantiates the fact that neither (entering paradise nor salvation from the fire) are achieved without the forgiveness and mercy of Allah. Additionally, some of the Scholars of the past have said that, "the next life is either Allah's pardon or the fire and this life is either Allah's protection or destruction" and as another example of this, Muhammad ibn Wasi' bid farewell to his companions at the time of his death by saying, "alaikumus-salaam (I bid you

farewell) to the fire or to Allah's pardon.

As for Allah's statement, **"This is the Paradise which you have been made to inherit because of your deeds which you used to do (in the life of the world)."** (Az-Zukhruf 43:72) and **"Eat and drink at ease for that which you have sent on before you in days past!"** (Al-Haqqah 69:24), the scholars have differed in regards to the meaning of these two verses and hold two opinions. The first is that entering paradise is only because of Allah's mercy and the actual placement in the various levels of paradise is based on deeds. While the second is that the letter 'ba' (the second letter in the Arabic language) in the previously mentioned verses, which have been translated as **"because of your deeds which you used to do (in the life of the world)"** and **"for that which you have sent on before you in days past!"** is used in this context to demonstrate a means or a cause (and not the sole reason), and that Allah has made action only a means to enter paradise. The letter 'ba', the very same letter in the previous verses, used in the prophet's (salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam) statement, "no one will enter into paradise because of their righteous deeds" contextually means compensation or exchange and the actual understanding of that narration is that no one is deserving of or entitled to paradise because of their actions. With this explanation, the delusion that the value of paradise is righteous action and that the one who has performed such actions is entitled to enter paradise just as the one who pays for a product is entitled to receive it has been removed. In addition to the fact that action, although a means, is not the ultimate reason for entering paradise, it has been clarified that the sole reason is indeed Allah's grace and mercy.

Therefore, entering paradise has become attached to Allah's infinite grave, mercy, and forgiveness because He is the creator of the means, the results, and consequences and is not a result of action itself.

In as-Sahih it has been reported that the prophet (salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam) said, "Allah the Most High said to the paradise, 'You are My mercy which I show to those of my servants whom I will.'" –end of translation

From just a short selection of this very powerful treatise and a little bit of reflection, we can clearly see that the prophet, the most righteous of all mankind, (salla Allahu alaihi wa sallam) himself, to the surprise of his companions, will not enter paradise based on his deeds. It is Allah who created us, our actions; one of His many blessings if taken advantage of, and paradise and it is He alone who enters into it whomever He pleases. Do actions play a role in that? Yes, it is clear from the previously mentioned texts that they serve as a means to gaining Allah's mercy and forgiveness but not the "golden ticket" itself. We can see from all of this, the Muslim takes the middle moderate course, as is the norm in all affairs, by not solely relying upon his/her righteous actions or solely banking on Allah's forgiveness while in continuous sin. Islam calls for the joining of those two actions; striving hard in righteous deeds and turning to Allah for His grace, mercy, and forgiveness. It's hard to imagine that by ignoring His legislation, or even worse blatantly opposing it, one will be in His good standings as Allah is perfectly just and perfectly merciful. At the same time, who can stand in front of The Creator of the heavens and earth and believe that he/she is owed that which is priceless?!