

Bismillahir Rahmanir rahim
Nahmaduhu wa Nusalli 'Alaa Rasulihil Kareem
wa 'alaa Aalihi wa Sahbihi ajma'een

: "There is no intercessor except after His *permission*." 10:4

"Whoso makes a righteous intercession shall partake of the good that ensues there from, and whoso makes an evil intercession will bear the consequence thereof." 4:85

Tawassul

Seeking a Means to Allahu ta 'ala with His Permission

The principle of intercession (Tawassul) is firmly established in Qur'an and Hadith as are all truly Islamic principles. Those who are sincere seekers will be lead down the path of truth. Once one is presented with clear proof from Quran and Sahih Hadith, and then protests or rejects those clear proofs, he commits kufr and leaves the fold of Islam. Now a day Muslims are declaring others Muslims kafr based on their lack of knowledge of the intimate details of Deen. May Allahu ta 'ala give us the insight and himma to accept all aspects of Islam, Ameen

The Former Mufti of Mecca, al-Sayyid Ahmad Ibn Zayni Dahlan (d. 1304) said in "Khulasat al-kalam": Tawassul (using means), tashaffu` (using intercession), and istighatha (asking help) all have the same meaning, and the only meaning they have in the hearts of the believers is that of tabarruk (using blessings) with the mention of Allah's beloved ones, since it is established that He grants His mercy to all His servants for the sake of His beloved ones, and this is the case whether they are alive or dead, because in either case *the actual effecting agent and true executor is Allah Himself*, and these beloved ones are only ordinary causes for His mercy. Like any other secondary causes, they have no effective power of influence in themselves.

Shafa`a is the Arabic noun for intercession or mediation or asking forgiveness from Allah for someone else. The word is used also in laying a petition before a king, interceding for a debtor, and in judicial procedure: · "Whoso makes a righteous intercession shall partake of the good that ensues there from, and whoso makes an evil intercession will bear the consequence thereof" (4:85); · "He who by his intercession invalidates one of Allah's hudud (laws concerning transgressions) is challenging (tahadda) Allah" (Bukhari, Anbiya' ch. 54). He who makes intercession is called shâfi`

Intercession in no way diminishes the fact that everything is under Allah's sovereignty. However, Allah created secondary causes and means, and He has said: "Seek the means to Allah" (5:35). Intercession is but one of those means and not the smallest. The fact that the Prophet said that to utter la ilaha illallah from the heart

guaranteed his intercession, implies that there is immense good in his intercession; what would we wish for in addition to the benefit brought by uttering the kalima, if it were not to be prized immensely?

That is why sincere love of the Prophet and of pious people is of a tremendous benefit, as one hopes thereby to be loved back. The Prophet said to the Arab who had prepared nothing for the Final Hour other than love for Allah and His Prophet: *yuhshar al-mar' ma` man ahabb*, "One is raised in the company of those he loves," and the Companions who were present said this was the happiest day of their lives for hearing this promise.[Narrated in Bukhari.] All this implies reliance, and contradicts the assertion of the book *al-Wala' wal-Bara'* that "relying on an intermediary between oneself and Allah when seeking intercession negates Islam."

The asking of intercession from the intercessor, as the asking of *du`a* from a pious Muslim, in no way implies that the person who asks believes any good can come apart from Allah. In effect he is asking Allah, but he is using the means that Allah put at his disposal, including the intercession of those who may be closer than himself to Allah. To refuse to believe that other may be closer than us to Allah is the sin of Iblis.

The clearest evidence for the permissibility of Tawassul are the words of Allahu ta 'ala:

2:255: "Who should intercede with him, *except* by his *permission*?"

10:4: "There is no intercessor except after His *permission*."

19:87: "They will have no power of intercession *except* him who has made a covenant with his Lord." -

43:86: "And those unto whom they cry instead of Him possess no power of intercession, *except* him who bear witness unto the truth knowingly."

Types of intercession:

1. Asking for help from Allahu ta 'ala by virtue of one good deeds
2. By virtue of asking those who have been given permission to intercede for one such as Sayyidinaa Rasuli Akram Sall Allahu 'alaihi wa Sallim and pious Persons such as companions and Saints.
3. By virtue of certain relics of Sayyidinaa Rasuli Akram Sall Allahu 'alaihi wa sallim

1. Asking for help from Allahu ta 'ala by virtue of one good deeds

[Sahih Bukhari, English translation Volume 8, Book 73, Number 5]:

Narrated Ibn `Umar: Allah's Apostle said, "While three persons were traveling, they were overtaken by rain and they took shelter in a cave in a mountain. A big rock fell from the mountain over the mouth of the cave and blocked it. They said to each other: Think of such righteous deeds which you did for Allah's sake only, and invoke Allah by mentioning those deeds so that Allah may relieve you from your difficulty.

One of them said: O Allah! I had my parents who were very old and I had small children for whose sake I used to work as a shepherd. When I returned to them at night and milked the sheep, I used to start giving the milk to my parents first before giving to my children. And one day I went far away in search of a grazing place for my sheep, and didn't return home till late at night and found that my parents had slept. I milked my livestock as usual and brought the milk vessel and stood at their heads, and I disliked to wake them up from their sleep, and I also disliked to give the milk to my children before my parents though my children were crying from hunger at my feet. So this state of mine and theirs continued till the day dawned. O Allah! If you considered that I had done that only for seeking Your pleasure, then please let there be an opening through which we can see the sky. So Allah made for them an opening through which they could see the sky.

Then the second person said: O Allah! I had a female cousin whom I loved as much as a passionate man loves a woman. I tried to seduce her but she refused till I paid her one-hundred dinars So I worked hard till I collected one hundred dinars and went to her with that But when I sat in between her legs (to have sexual intercourse with her), she said: O Allah's slave! Be afraid of Allah! Do not deflower me except legally (by marriage contract). So I left her alone. O Allah! If you considered that I had done that only for seeking Your pleasure then please let the rock move a little to have a wider opening. So Allah shifted that rock to make the opening wider for them.

And the last person said: O Allah! I employed a laborer for wages equal to a faraq (a certain measure) of rice, and when he had finished his job he demanded his wages, but when I presented his due to him, he gave it up and refused to take it. Then I kept on sowing that rice for him (several times) until I managed to buy, with the price of the yield, some cows and their shepherd. Later on the laborer came to me and said: Be afraid of Allah, and do not be unjust to me and give me my due. I said to him: Go and take those cows and their shepherd. So he took them and went away. If You considered that I had done that for seeking Your pleasure, then please remove the remaining part of the rock. And so Allah delivered them."]

2. By virtue of asking those who have been given permission to intercede for one such as Sayyidinaa Rasuli Akram Sall Allahu 'alaihi wa Sallim and pious Persons such as companions and Saints.

From Holy Qur'an:

3:159: "Pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs." -

4:64: "And if, when they had wronged themselves, they had but come unto thee and asked forgiveness of Allah, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah forgiving, merciful." -

4:106-107: "And ask forgiveness of Allah (for others). Allah is ever forgiving, merciful. And plead not on behalf of those who deceive themselves." -

8:33: "But Allah would not punish them while thou wast with them, nor will He punish them while they seek forgiveness." -

9:80, 84: "Ask forgiveness for them (the hypocrites) or ask not forgiveness for them; though thou ask forgiveness for them seventy times Allah will not forgive them... And never pray for one of them who dieth, nor stand by his grave." -

9:103: "Pray for them. Lo! thy prayer is an assuagement for them."

The intercession of the Prophet in his lifetime is explicitly and frequently established:

In Qur'an Majid:

- 3:159: "Pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs."
- 4:64: "And if, when they had wronged themselves, they had but come unto thee and asked forgiveness of Allah, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah forgiving, merciful."
- 4:106-107: "And ask forgiveness of Allah (for others). Allah is ever forgiving, merciful. And plead not on behalf of those who deceive themselves."
- 8:33: "But Allah would not punish them while thou wast with them, nor will He punish them while they seek forgiveness."
- 9:80, 84: "Ask forgiveness for them (the hypocrites) or ask not forgiveness for them; though thou ask forgiveness for them seventy times Allah will not forgive them... And never pray for one of them who dieth, nor stand by his grave."
- 9:103: "Pray for them. Lo! thy prayer is an assuagement for them."
- 9:113: "It is not for the Prophet, and those who believe, to pray for the forgiveness of idolaters even though they may be near of kin (to them) after it hath become clear that they are people of hell-fire."

- 24:62: "If they ask thy leave for some affair of theirs, give leave to whom thou wilt of them, and ask for them forgiveness of Allah."
- 47:19: "Know that there is no god save Allah, and ask forgiveness for thy sin and for believing men and believing women."
- 60:12: "Accept their [believing women's] allegiance and ask Allah to forgive them."
- 63:5-6: "And when it is said unto them: Come! the messenger of Allah will ask forgiveness for you! they [the hypocrites] avert their faces and thou seest them turning away, disdainful. Whether thou ask forgiveness for them or ask not forgiveness for them, Allah will not forgive them."

In the Hadith:

- Bukhari and Muslim: Jabir narrated that the Prophet said: "I have been given five things which no prophet was given before me:

- I was made victor over my enemies through fear struck in their heart;
- I was permitted to take the booty of war;
- The whole earth was made a place of prostration for me and its soil ritually pure, so when the time to pray comes upon anyone of my Community, let him pray there and then;
- *I was given shafa`a (intercession/mediation with Allah);*
- Every prophet was sent to his people in particular and I was sent to all peoples.

In his lifetime for those who passed away:

Muslim [jana'iz]: Abu Hurayra narrates that a dark-complexioned woman or young man used to sweep the mosque. When that person died, no-one told the Prophet until he enquired about it and then went to pray over the grave. He remarked: "Verily, these graves are full of darkness for their dwellers. Verily, Allah Mighty and Glorious illuminates them for their occupants by reason of my prayer for them."

.In the afterlife –

al-Daraqutni, al-Dulabi, al-Bayhaqi, Khatib al-Baghdadi, al-'Uqayli, Ibn 'Adi, Tabarani, and Ibn Khuzayma in his Sahih, all through various chains going back to Musa ibn Hilal al-'Abdi from 'Ubayd Allah Ibn 'Umar, both from Nafi', From Ibn 'Umar: "Whoever visits my grave, my intercession will be guaranteed for him."

Intercession of special members of the Prophet's Community:

In their lifetime for the living -

Bukhari [Istisqa']: Annas narrated: Whenever drought threatened them, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab used to ask Allah for rain through the mediation of al-'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib. He ['Umar] used to say: "O Allah! We used to ask you through the means of our Prophet and You would bless us with rain, and now we ask You through the means of our Prophet's uncle, so bless us with rain." And it would rain.

In the afterlife –

Tirmidhi (hasan), Ibn Maja, and al-Hakim: Abu Umama narrated that the Prophet said: "More men will enter Paradise through the intercession of a certain man than there are people in the tribes of Rabī`ah and Mudar," and that the elders considered that this was `Uthman ibn `Affan. - Tirmidhi (hasan sahih), Ibn Maja, and al-Hakim (sahih): Abu Abi al-Jad`a narrated that the Prophet said: "More men will enter Paradise through the intercession of one man than there are people in the tribe of Banu Tamim." They asked him: "Other than you?" He said: "Other than me," and it was said Uways al-Qarani was meant.

Tirmidhi (hasan), al-Bazzar: Abu Sa`id al-Khudri and Anas respectively narrate that the Prophet said: "One will be told: Stand, O So-and-so, and make intercession, and he will stand and make intercession for his tribe and his family and for one man or two men or more according to his works." - The du`a that is recited in the funeral prayer of a non-adult: O Allah, make him/her our forerunner, and make him for us a reward and a treasure, make him one who will intercede (shafi`an) and whose intercession is accepted (mushaffa`an). In this du`a we are clearly asking for intercession from a person who has passed away, in fact in this one we are asking for intercession from a child who has not done any deeds in this world at all. A version of it mentioning intercession is in Nawawi's Adhkar, Chapter of the du`as over the dead, and it is translated in Nuh Keller's Reliance of the Traveller in the section on Funerals. In fact every janaza prayer contains a request for the intercession of the deceased in the phrase: *wa la tahrimna ajrahu* which means: "and do not prevent his reward from reaching us."

Bukhari related that the Prophet also said: "He whose three children died before the age of puberty, they will shield him from the Hell-Fire, or will make him enter Paradise." The Prophet said on the authority of `Umar: "When Adam committed his mistake he said: O my Lord, I am asking you to forgive me for the sake of Muhammad. Allah said: O Adam, and how do you know about Muhammad whom I have not yet created? Adam replied, O my Lord, after You created me with your hand and breathed into me of Your Spirit, I raised my head and saw written on the heights of the Throne: LA ILAHA ILLALLAH MUHAMMADUN RASULULLAH I understood that You would not place next to Your Name but the Most Beloved One of Your creation. Allah said: O Adam, I have forgiven you, and were it not for Muhammad I would not have created you." It was transmitted through many chains and was cited by Bayhaqi (in *Dala'il al-nibuwwa*), Abu Nu`aym (in *Dala'il al-nibuwwa*), al-Hakim in *al-Mustadrak* (2:615), al-Tabarani in his *Saghir* (2:82, 207) with another chain.

Following is a list of the principal benefits obtained by invoking blessings on the Prophet as compiled by the hafiz al-Sakhawi in his book devoted to the topic, entitled: *al-Qawl al-badi` fi al-salat `ala al-habib al-shafi`* (The Radiant Discourse Concerning the Invocation of Blessings on the Beloved Intercessor):

Among the rewards of one who performs salat upon Allah's Messenger are the following:

- The salat -- blessing -- of Allah, His angels, and His Prophet on that person;
- the expiation of his faults;
- the purification of his works; •?the exaltation of his rank;
- the forgiveness of his sins; •?the asking of forgiveness for him by his own salat;

- the recording of rewards the like of Mount Uhud for him and his repayment in superabundant measure;
- the comfort of his world and his hereafter if he devotes his entire salat to invoking blessings upon him;
- the obliteration of more faults than that effected by the manumission of a slave;
- his deliverance from affliction because of it;
- the witnessing of the Prophet himself to it;
- the guarantee of the Prophet's intercession for him;
- Allah's pleasure, mercy, and safety from His anger;
- admission under the shade of the Throne for him;
- preponderance of his good deeds in the Balance;
- his admission to drink from the Prophet's Pond;
- his safety from thirst and deliverance from the Fire;
- his ability to cross the Bridge swiftly;
- the sight of his seat in Paradise before he dies;
- numerous wives in Paradise;
- the preponderance of his salat over more than twenty military conquests; •?its equivalency to giving alms to the needy;
- its being zakat and purification for him;
- his wealth and possessions will increase because of its blessing;
- more than one hundred of his needs will be fulfilled through it;
- it constitutes worship;
- it is the most beloved of all deeds to Allah;
- it beautifies meetings;
- it cancels out poverty and material duress;
- it lets him expect and find goodness everywhere;
- it makes him the most deserving of goodness;
- he benefits from it as well as his children and theirs, as well as those to whom its reward is gifted in the register of his good deeds;
- it brings him near to Allah and to His Prophet;
- it is a light that helps him against his enemies;
- it cleans his heart of hypocrisy and rust;
- it commands the love of people and the sight of the Prophet in dreams;
- it forbids slander (ghiba) against him;

Angels are permitted to intercede for whomever Allah wills, specifically among the believers:

In Qur'an Majid

- 21:26-28: "And they say: the Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son... Nay, but honored slaves [angels]... and they cannot intercede except for him whom He accepteth, and they quake for awe of Him." –
- 40:7: "Those who bear the Throne, and all who are round about it... ask forgiveness for those who believe." –
- 42:5: "The angels hymn the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on the earth."

3. By virtue of certain relics of Sayyidinaa Rasuli Akram Sall Allahu 'alaihi wa sallim

Tabarruk with the Prophet's hair and nails. There are countless hadiths on this.

- Bukhari narrates in his Sahih in the Book of Clothing, under the chapter entitled "What is mentioned about gray hair," that 'Usman ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Mawhab said: "My family sent me to Umm Salama with a cup of water. Umm Sala ma brought out a silver bottle which contained one of the hairs of the Prophet, and it used to be that if anyone came under the evil eye or ill health they used to send her a cup of water through which she would pass this hair (for drinking). We used to look into the silver bottle: I saw some reddish hairs." -
- Anas said: "When the Prophet shaved his head (after pilgrimage), Abu Talha was the first one to take of his hair." Bukhari. -
- Anas also said: "The Prophet threw stones at al-Jamra, then sacrificed, then told the barber to shave his head right side first, then began to give the hair away to the people." Muslim. - He said: "Talha was the one distributing it." Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud.
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- He also said: "When the Prophet shaved his head in Mina, he gave me the hair from the right side and he said: Anas! take it to Umm Sulaym [his mother]. When the companions saw what the Prophet gave us, they began to compete to take the hair from the left side, and everyone was getting a share from that." Ahmad narrated it.

Tabarruk with the Prophet's saliva and ablution water.

- In Bukhari and Muslim: The Companions would compete for whoever would get the remnant of the Prophet's ablution water in order to put it on their faces. Nawawi in Sharh Sahih Muslim said: "In these narrations is evidence for seeking blessings with the relics of the saints" (fihi al-tabarruk bi athar al-salihin).
- The Prophet used to heal the sick with his saliva mixed with some earth with the words: "Bismillah, the soil of our earth with the saliva of one / some of us shall heal our sick with our Lord's permission." Bukhari and Muslim.

Regarding this hadith Ibn Hajar says in Fath al-bari (1989 ed. 10:255-256):

The Prophet's words "with the saliva of one or some of us" indicate that he would spit at the time of using a protective invocation (ruqya). Nawawi said (in Sharh Sahih Muslim): "The meaning of the hadith is that the Prophet put some of his saliva on his forefinger then placed it on some earth and formed some clot with it with which he wiped the place of the ailment or the wound, pronouncing the words of the hadith at the time of wiping." Qurtubi said: "The hadith shows the permissibility of using protective invocations against any and all ailments, and it shows that this was an open and widely-known matter among them." He also said: "The Prophet's placing of his finger on the earth and of the earth on

his finger indicates the desirability of doing this when using a protective invocation.... This falls under none other than the heading of obtaining blessing (tabarruk) through Allah's Names and through what His Prophet left us." Ibn Hajar concludes: Protective invocations (ruqya) and those hanged upon oneself (^aza'im) have wondrous effects, the true nature of which boggles the mind.

Intercession of special members of the Prophet's Community such as saints and scholars:

In their lifetime for the living

- Bukhari [Istisqa']: Annas narrated: Whenever drought threatened them, `Umar ibn al-Khattab used to ask Allah for rain through the mediation of al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib. He [^Umar] used to say: "O Allah! We used to ask you through the means of our Prophet and You would bless us with rain, and now we ask You through the means of our Prophet's uncle, so bless us with rain." And it would rain.

In the afterlife

- Tirmidhi (hasan), Ibn Maja, and al-Hakim: Abu Umama narrated that the Prophet said: "More men will enter Paradise through the intercession of a certain man than there are people in the tribes of Rabi`ah and Mudar," and that the elders considered that this was `Uthman ibn `Affan.

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The Prophet emphasized in many authentic narrations the benefit brought to all creation through the intercession of Allah's saints and their standing with Him. Suyuti in his fatwa on the abdal in his Hawi li al-fatawi provided many examples of this type of universal intercession from which we quote the following:

1. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal says in his Musnad (1:112):

... The people of Syria were mentioned in front of `Ali ibn Abi Talib while he was in Iraq, and they said: "Curse them, O Commander of the Believers." He replied: "No, I heard the Messenger of Allah say: "The Substitutes (al-abdal) are in Syria and they are forty men, every time one of them dies, Allah substitutes another in his place. By means of them Allah brings down the rain, gives (Muslims) victory over their enemies, and averts punishment from the people of Syria."" al-Haythami said: "The men in its chains are all those of the sahih except for Sharih ibn `Ubayd, and he is trustworthy (thiqa)."

2. al-Hakim narrated the following which he graded sound (sahih), and al-Dhahabi confirmed him:

‘Ali said: "Do not curse the people of Syria, for among them are the Substitutes (al-abdal), but curse their injustice." Note that any religious knowledge unattainable through ijtihad and authentically conveyed from one of the Companions is considered a hadith by the experts of that science.

3. **Tabarani** said in his *Mu`jam al-awsat*:

Anas said: The Prophet said: "The earth will never lack forty men similar to the Friend of the Merciful [Prophet Ibrahim], and through them people [Muslims] receive rain and are given victory (over their enemies). None of them dies except Allah substitutes another in his place." Qatada said: "We do not doubt that al-Hasan [al-Basri] is one of them."

Intercession of the common believers among the Prophet's Community (Non-scholars or Saliheen):

In their lifetime for those who passed away:

- Muslim [jana'iz]: `A'ishah reports the Prophet as saying: "If a company of Muslims numbering one hundred pray over a dead person, all of them interceding for him, their intercession for him will be accepted."
- Muslim [jana'iz]: Ibn `Abbas said: "I have heard the Prophet say: If any Muslim dies and forty men who associate nothing with Allah stand over his body in prayer, Allah will accept them as intercessors for him."
- Ahmad [4:79, 4:100] and others: In many traditions the number of acceptable intercessors in the funeral prayer is reduced to three rows of men, even if the number is under forty. Nawawi says the scholars of *Usul al-fiqh* adduce these traditions also.

In the afterlife:

- Tirmidhi (hasan), al-Bazzar: Abu Sa`id al-Khudri and Anas respectively narrate that the Prophet said: "One will be told: Stand, O So-and-so, and make intercession, and he will stand and make intercession for his tribe and his family and for one man or two men or more according to his works."

- The du`a that is recited in the funeral prayer of a non-adult:

O Allah, make him/her our forerunner, and make him for us a reward and a treasure, make him one who will intercede (shafi`an) and whose intercession is accepted (mushaffa`an). In

this du`a we are clearly asking for intercession from a person who has passed away, in fact in this one we are asking for intercession from a child who has not done any deeds in this world at all. A version of it mentioning intercession is in Nawawi's Adhkar, Chapter of the du`as over the dead, and it is translated in Nuh Keller's Reliance in the section on Funerals.

In fact every janaza prayer contains a request for the intercession of the deceased in the phrase: *wa la tahrinna ajrahu* which means: "and do not prevent his reward from reaching us." Bukhari related that the Prophet also said: "He whose three children died before the age of puberty, they will shield him from the Hell-Fire, or will make him enter Paradise."

The Salaf as Salihoon and Tawassul:

· Imam Malik was asked the following question by the Caliph Abu Ja`far al-Mansur: "Shall I face the qibla with my back towards the grave of the Messenger of Allah when making du`a (after salams)?" He replied:

"How could you turn your face away from him when he is the means (wasila) of your and your father Adam's forgiveness to Allah on the Day of Resurrection? Nay, face him and ask for his intercession (istashfi` bihi) so that Allah will grant it to you as He said: "If they had only, when they were wronging themselves, come unto thee and asked Allah's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah indeed Oft-returning, Most Merciful (4:64)."

" It is cited by al-Qadi `Iyad in al-Shifa (2:92-93) with a sound (sahih) chain, and also cited by Samhudi in Khulasat al- Wafa, Subki in Shifa' al-siqam, Qastallani in al-Mawahib al-laduniyya, Ibn Jama`a in Hidayat al-salik , and Haytami in al-Jawhar al-munazzam and Tuhfat al-zuwwar. See also Ibn `Abd al-Hadi in al-Sarim al-munki p. 244. Ibn Jama`a says in Hidayat al-salik (3:1381): "It is related by the two hafiz Ibn Bashkuwal and al-Qadi `Iyad in al- Shifa' after him, and no attention is paid to the words of those who claim that it is forged purely on the basis of his idle desires."

The words "he is the means (wasilat) of your and your father Adam's forgiveness to Allah" are confirmed by the verses whereby the Prophet is witness over all communities and people including their Prophets (2:143, 3:81, 4:41, 33:7) as well as the sound hadith of his intercession over all prophets on behalf of all believers in Sahih al-Bukhari (Kitab al-Tawhid). Furthermore, it is also established from the verse "And Adam received words from his Lord and He relented towards him" (2:37) that Adam has been forgiven.

Hadith of the Blind man seeking help through the Prophet Sall Allahu 'alaihi wa Sallim:

· A blind man came to the Prophet and said: "Invoke Allah for me that he help me." He replied: "If you wish I will delay this, and it would be better for you, and if you wish I will invoke Allah the Exalted (for you)." He said: "Then invoke him."

The Prophet said to him: *idhhab fa tawadda'*, *wa salli rak`atayn thumma qul* -- "Go and make an ablution, pray two rak`at, then say: "O Allah, I am asking you (as'aluka) and turning to

you (atawajjuh ilayka) with your Prophet Muhammad (bi nabiyyika Muhammad), the Prophet of mercy; O Muhammad (ya Muhammad), I am turning with you to my Lord regarding my present need / I am asking my Lord with your intercession concerning the return of my sight (inni atawajjuh bika ila rabbi fi hajati hadhih -- another version has: inni astashfi`u bika `ala rabbi fi raddi basari) so that He will fulfill my need; O Allah, allow him to intercede (with you) for me (allahumma shaffi`hu fiyya)."

It is related by Ahmad (4:138 #17246-17247), Tirmidhi (hasan sahibh gharib -- Da`awat Ch. 119), Ibn Majah (Book of Iqamat al-salat wa al-sunnat, Ch. on Salat al-hajat #1385), Nasai (Amal al-yawm wa al-laylat p. 417-418 #658- 660), al-Hakim (1:313, 1:526), Tabarani in al-Kabir, and rigorously authenticated as sound (sahih) by nearly fifteen hadith masters including Ibn Hajar, Dhahabi, Shawkani, and Ibn Taymiyya.

1. The Prophet's order, here as elsewhere, carries legislative force for all Muslims and is not limited to a particular person, place or time; it is valid for all generations until the end of time unless proven otherwise by a subsequent indication from the Prophet himself, Peace be upon him.
2. The Prophet was not physically present at the assigned time of the invocation, since he said to the blind man: "Go and make ablution," without adding: "and then come back in front of me." With regard to physical absence, the living and the dead are exactly alike, namely: absent.
3. Despite the Prophet's physical absence, the wording (sigha) for calling upon his intercession is direct address: "O Muhammad." Such a wording -- "O So-and-So" -- is only used with someone present and able to hear. It should also be noted that Allah forbade the Companions from being forward or calling out to the Prophet in the ordinary manner used with one another (49:1-2). The only way, therefore, that the Prophet, Blessings and peace be upon him, could both be absent and at the same be addressed is that the first be understood in the physical sense and the second in the spiritual.

The above invocation was also used after the Prophet's lifetime, as is proven by the sound (sahih) hadith authenticated by Bayhaqi, Abu Nu`aym in the Ma`rifa, Mundhiri (Targhib 1:473-474), Haythami, and Tabarani in the Kabir (9:17- 18) and the Saghir (1:184/201-202) on the authority of `Uthman ibn Hunayf's nephew Abu Imama ibn Sahl ibn Hunayf:

A man would come to `Uthman ibn `Affan for a certain need, but the latter would not pay him any attention nor look into his need, upon which he complained of his condition to `Uthman ibn Hunayf who told him: "Go and make ablution, then go to the mosque and pray two rak`at, then say (this du`a)," and he mentioned the invocation of the blind man, "then go (to `Uthman again)." The man went, did as he was told, then came to `Uthman's door, upon which the door-attendant came, took him by the hand, and brought him to `Uthman who sat him with him on top of the carpet, and said: "Tell me what your need is." After this the man went out, met `Uthman ibn Hunayf again, and said to him:

"May Allah reward you! Previously he would not look into my need nor pay any attention to me, until you spoke to him." He replied: "I did not speak to him, but I saw the Prophet when a blind man came to him complaining of his failing eyesight," and he mentioned to him the substance of the previous narration.

· It is narrated that `Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph, would pray to Allah for rain during times of drought through the means, the honor and intercession of the uncle of the Prophet, `Abbas ibn `Abd Muttalib by using this supplication, "O Our Lord! Previously, when we had a drought, we used to come to You by means and intercession of Your Prophet. Now we are requesting intercession through the uncle of the Prophet to grant us rain." And it was granted. Bukhari relates it. `Umar added, after making this supplication: "He (al-`Abbas), by Allah, is the means to Allah" (hadha wallahi al-wasilatu ilallah `azza wa jall). Ibn `Abd al-Barr relates it in al-Isti`ab bi ma`rifat al-ashab.

· Al-`Utbi said: "As I was sitting by the grave of the Prophet, a Beduin Arab came and said: "Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah! I have heard Allah saying: "If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves, come unto thee and asked Allah's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah indeed Oft-returning, Most Merciful" (4:64), so I have come to you asking forgiveness for my sin, seeking your intercession with my Lord." Then he began to recite poetry:

O best of those whose bones are buried in the deep earth,
And from whose fragrance the depth
and the height have become sweet,
May I be the ransom for a grave which thou inhabit,
And in which are found purity, bounty and munificence!

Then he left, and I dozed and saw the Prophet in my sleep. He said to me: "O `Utbi, run after the Beduin and give him glad tidings that Allah has forgiven him."

"A report graded mashhur (established and well-known) and related by Nawawi, Adhkar, Mecca ed. p. 253-254, al- Majmu` 8:217, and al-Idah fi manasik al-hajj, chapters on visiting the grave of the Prophet; Ibn Jama`a, Hidayat alsalik 3:1384; Ibn `Aqil, al-Tadhkira; Ibn Qudama, al-Mughni 3:556-557; al-Qurtubi, Tafsir of 4:64 in Ahkam al-Qur'an 5:265; Samhudi, Khulasat al-Wafa p. 121 (from Nawawi); Dahlan, Khulasat al-Kalam 2:247; Ibn Kathir, Tafsir 2:306, and al-Bidayat wa al-nihayat 1:180; Abu al-Faraj ibn Qudama, al-Sharh al-kabir 3:495; al-Bahuti al-Hanbali, Kashshaf al-qina` 5:30; Taqi al-Din al-Subki, Shifa' al-siqam p. 52; Ibn al-Jawzi, Muthir al-gharam al-sakin ila ashraf al-alamakin p. 490; al-Bayhaqi, Shu`ab al-iman #4178; Ibn `Asakir, Mukhtasar tarikh Dimashq 2:408; Ibn Hajar al- Haytami, al-Jawhar al-munazzam [commentary on Nawawi's Idah]; Ibn al-Najjar, Akhbar al-Madina p. 147. A similar report is cited through Sufyan ibn `Uyayna (Shafi`i's shaykh), and through Abu Sa`id al-Sam`ani on the authority of `Ali.

Al-`Utbi's account of the Arab's tawassul for forgiveness at the Prophet's grave is famous: It is found in many books on the subject of ziyara (visiting the Prophet's grave in Madina) or manasik (rites of pilgrimage) by the many scholars of the Four Schools, none of whom have rejected it or declared it weak. See, for example, the translations of Ibn al-Jawzi, Nawawi, and Ibn Jama`a in the last section of this book. Those of the contemporary "Salafi" scholars

who choose to contest this report of its established grade of mashhur, do not measure up to the reliability of a single one of the sources named above.

· Al-hafiz Ibn al-Jawzi relates in Kitab al-Wafa (p. 818 #1536): (Al-Hafiz) Abu Bakr al-Minqari said: "I was with (al- Hafiz) al-Tabarani and (al-Hafiz) Abu al-Shaykh in the Mosque of the Prophet and we were in a predicament. We became very hungry. That day and the next we didn't eat. When it was time for 'isha, I came to the Prophet's grave and I said: "O Messenger of Allah, we are hungry, we are hungry!" (ya rasullallah al-ju` al-ju') Then I left. Abu al- Shaykh said to me: "Sit. Either there will be food for us, or death." I slept and Abu al-Shaykh slept. Al-Tabarani stayed awake, researching something. Then a `Alawi (descendant of `Ali) came knocking at the door with two boys, each one carrying a palm-leaf basket filled with food. We sat up and ate. We thought that the children would take back the remainder but they left everything behind. When we finished the `Alawi said: "O people, did you complain to the Prophet? I saw him in my sleep and he ordered me to bring something to you.""

It is essential to understand that it is not, in reality, the Prophet who is the ultimate object of supplication, nor is he the one who grants it, but he is the best means of forwarding it to Allah and for its being granted by Allah. This is clear in the Prophet's prayer to Allah, in his words, "through Your Prophet and the Prophets before me" and "through those who ask" in the following two hadiths:

· On the authority of Abu Sa`id al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him: He relates that the Messenger of Allah said: "The one who leaves his house for prayer and then says: "O Allah, I ask you by the right of those who ask you and I beseech you by the right of those who walk this path unto you that my going forth bespeak not of levity, pride nor vainglory nor done for the sake of repute. I have gone forth in the warding off your anger and for the seeking of your pleasure. I ask you, therefore, to grant me refuge from hell fire and to forgive me my sins. For no one forgive sins but yourself." Allah will accept for his sake and seventy thousand angels will seek his forgiveness."

It is related in Musnad Ahmad 3:21, Ibn Majah (Masajid), al-Mundhiri in al-Targhib 1:179, Ibn Khuzayma in his Sahih, Ibn al-Sani, and Abu Nu`aym.