

Patience in the Face of Trials and Tribulations

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Sunnah of Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) with the believing slaves is that He tries and tests them. This is from the affairs that every single believer experiences throughout his life. Some of those trials and tests relate to him specifically as an individual, some are trials and tests that Allāh (عز وجل) places upon his family, some affect his immediate community, some affect his land/country, and some of them may possibly affect the Ummah—that is the nature of īmān.

It was the nature of īmān with the previous nations, the Anbiyā'i war-Rusul whom Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) sent in the past and their followers, and it is the Sunnah of Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) with the believers now. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) informs us as occurs in a ḥadīth in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, “The example of the believer is the example of a shoot of vegetation; the wind does not cease blowing it and taking it. Likewise, the believer does not cease being afflicted [i.e. throughout his life]. While the example of the munāfiq (hypocrite) is the example of the Araz tree. It remains thābit (steadfast/firm/it does not move) until it is cut down.” That is the example of the munafiq i.e. you rarely see anything happening with him/her and you may possibly see what appears to be from the good of the dunyā.

And so, Allāh (عز وجل) tests the believer, as the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) informs us in this ḥadīth and numerous other aḥādīth, and this was understood by the Salaf of this Ummah. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (رحمه الله) mentions, “We have tried and tested affairs and those who have

experience have done so, and we have not seen anything more beneficial than ṣabr (patience). By way of it, it is the one thing that is used to cure those affairs that are not cured except by way of it.”

There are some issues that no medicine can cure. There is no technician or engineer or doctor that can cure certain situations/affairs. The only thing that can cure them is ṣabr. And thus, the believer nurtures himself throughout his life upon being patient, for indeed these trials and afflictions, they shall certainly come and you shall be tried and tested. Allāh (عز وجل) has informed us of that,

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

“And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to aṣ-Ṣābirīn (the patient ones, etc.)” [Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:155]

You have worked hard for a particular thing, you established something for a period, years maybe, and then it would appear that the fruits of your labour are lost. This is the nature of īmān, and that is the nature of the trial and the test that Allāh (عز وجل) places upon the believers. But what is it that Allāh (عز وجل) has mentioned thereon after? **“But give glad tidings to the patient.”**

This bishārah (glad tidings) only comes to those who are afflicted by something that Allāh places upon him/her to test him/her. If he/she is patient, then the fruit that comes from that is beautiful, which cannot be purchased with wealth. It is not something that you can acquire with the position you may have or with your station—this is from Allāh (عز وجل). But it will require patience.

And thus, from the Salaf of this Ummah we have those who went through trials and they were advised by their contemporaries with ṣabr. When ‘Umar b. ‘Abdil-‘Azīz (رحمه الله) went through a trial, Sābiq b. ‘Abdillāh al-Barbarī wrote him some lines of poetry to console him,

In the Name of Allāh, from Whom the suwar (verses of the Qur’ān) were revealed

Wal-ḥamdulillāh ‘amma ba’d yā ‘Umar

Indeed, if you know in relation to time and what comes, the things that occur and what has passed

Then be upon caution [i.e. concerning life generally]

For indeed this caution will benefit you

Be patient upon those things that were decreed for you

Even if that qadar (decree) brings about something that you dislike

For indeed, there is not a day that you see something that gives you pleasure and joy except that it will be followed by days that displease you.

That is the reality of our existence and our life in the dunyā, so the believer prepares. He prepares himself psychologically for that which he knows will come. He enjoys times of good pleasure but he prepares himself for those difficult periods that he knows are inevitable. He prepares himself, he is ready and he is not taken by grief or worry concerning that which may occur or possibly come to him. Rather, he is prepared, and he prepares for that with patience.

From the affair of this preparation, we secondly look towards that which is related to our belief in al-Qaḍā' wal-Qadar. That which is related to this 'Aqīdah Ṣaḥīḥah (correct belief) that the believer has in his heart. His belief that, as the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, "Know, that even if the people were to come together to benefit you with something, then they will not be able to benefit you except with that which Allāh has written for you. And if they were to come together to harm you with something, then know that they would not harm you except with that which Allāh has written for you. The pens have been lifted and the scrolls are dried."

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) mentions in a ḥadīth as occurs in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, "Indeed, Allāh (عز وجل) has placed an angel in the womb (of the pregnant woman) and the angel says, 'O my Lord, it is a nuṭfah (semen). O my Lord, it is an 'alaqah (clinging clot). O my, Lord it is a muḍghah (morsel of flesh).' So when Allāh (عز وجل) intends to decree His creation, the angel says, 'O my Lord, male or female? O my Lord, shaqīyyun or sa'īd (wretched or in bliss and happiness)? O my Lord, what is its provision? O my Lord, what is its decree (i.e. when will it pass away)?' And all of that is written in the womb of that mother."

Similarly, there is a narration that was collected by Imām Abū Dāwūd and was declared ṣaḥīḥ by Shaykh al-Albānī. The narration of Ibn ad-Daylamī who said that he approached 'Ubayy b. Ka'b (رضى الله عنه) and said, "There has occurred in my chest something concerning Qadar, so narrate to me/inform me of something that perhaps by way of it Allāh will get rid of that which is in my heart." So 'Ubayy (رضى الله عنه) said, "Know, that if Allāh (عز وجل) were to punish all of the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, then He would do so and He would not have oppressed them [i.e. they deserved to be punished]. And if He were to shower them with His Mercy, then His Mercy is better than their actions." I.e. the Mercy and reward they receive is by way of the

Mercy of Allāh and it is greater than the actions they perform, so let us not be beguiled into thinking that we perform our actions in exchange for entering Jannah. We are rewarded by way of the things that we have done, but it is not that which enters us into Jannah; it is the Mercy of Allāh.

As the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) mentioned, “None of you will enter Jannah by way of your actions.” They said, “Not even you O Messenger of Allāh?” He said, “Not even me. Except that Allāh overcomes me with His Mercy. But you should do that which is well and correct.”

It is the Mercy of Allāh that will enter you into Jannah but do not believe that it is a ticket for you to do as you please—no. Do well, and by way of doing so you will earn the Mercy of Allāh. And we ask Allāh to shower us with His Mercy.

He said, “And know that whatever comes to you, it was not going to pass you. And whatever passed you was not going to come to you. And if you were to die upon other than this belief, then you will enter the Fire.” Ibn ad-Daylamī said, “Then I went to ‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd and he said the same. Then I went to Hudhayfah b. al-Yamān and he said the same. Then I went to Zayd b. Thābit and he narrated to me from the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) the same.”

This was their belief. This was how they understood the reality of our existence in the dunyā and the fact that these things will occur, regardless of what we believe is going to happen or what we believe we are able to change—they will occur. Prepare for them. Be ready for them. Do not grieve when they occur. Rather, know that it is khayr, as the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said as occurs in the ḥadīth of Abī Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه), “Whoever Allāh wants good for, He causes afflictions to overcome him.”

This reality was something the Salaf of this Ummah understood and knew: that the best in īmān were going to be the greatest who are tested, as the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) informed. This is a reality. The Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), we saw him go through the afflictions that he went through. He was tried and tested in Makkah, tried and tested when he gave da‘wah, he was accused of being a poet, he was accused of being a soothsayer, he was accused of being a magician, he was accused of being mufarriq (one who causes nothing but division and seeks to split families). He lost his uncle Abū Ṭālib, the one who protected him. He lost his wife Khadījah (رضى الله عنها), he lost his daughters, he then had a son, Ibrāhīm, he lost his son. He went through trials and afflictions in the way of Allāh (سبحانه وتعالى) until Allāh (عز وجل) established his affair and made his name ring from the masājid across the globe. Until Allāh (عز وجل) placed his name and raised his station to the extent that every time we pray, we mention him. When we recite the Qur’ān, we read his name. When we read the aḥādīth of the Messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), our mouths are filled with the statement صلى الله عليه وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم. This was the legacy of Muḥammad (عليه الصلاة والسلام)—the best of the Prophets and Messengers that ever existed.

And so, the Salaf understood that indeed, the trials and the calamities that are going to come are nothing in comparison to that which the Messengers went through, and they are, without doubt, an indication of khayr (good). If we are not tried and if we are not tested, then that is something we should be worrying about. Where are these trials? Where are they? If we are not going through afflictions and difficulties and hardships with our family, hardships with ourselves, with our wealth, hardships in our communities, hardships in our societies, if we are not being accused

and not being blamed, if we are not being chastised, we should question ourselves because the nature of belief is the likes of these trials and tests.

‘Urwah b. Zubayr (رحمه الله) was tried with a calamity in his body and his children. One of his children passed away and he (رحمه الله) lost one of his limbs. In relation to that, he made the following statement/du‘ā’, “O Allāh, indeed I had seven children, You took one and left six; and I had four limbs and You took one and left three. O Allāh, indeed, though You have tried me, You have allowed me to retain blessings.”

And so, they understood that even though these were trials, they would look at what Allāh (عز وجل) had allowed them to keep. This statement and trial of ‘Urwah was something the Salaf would make mention of when they observed someone going through a trial.

In relation to the affair of ‘Urwah, it was said concerning Walīd b. ‘Abdil-Malik that a blind man with a disfigured face came to him and he did not see upon him any signs of complaint (i.e. he made no distasteful statements). He said, “Indeed I was a wealthy man and had many children. I spent the night in a valley with my wealth and my children and a torrent came and passed through that valley and it took all of my wealth and it took all of my children, except for one child and one camel. And so, the child and the camel remained with me. I left them on an occasion and the child held on to the camel, and when I returned I saw the head of a wolf eating from the stomach of my child, so I left him and I followed the camel. I took the camel with me and as I took the camel it flung its head and struck my face and I lost my sight by way of it [the camel disfigured my face and caused me to lose my sight]. So I saw myself with no wealth, no children and no

sight.” Al-Walīd said, “Take him to ‘Urwah, that he may know that among the people are those who are greater in trial than him.”

By Allāh, these trials and the calamities will come to us but our position is that we consider the trial and the calamity a lesson that is to be learned. We are patient throughout it. We recognise that it is a sign of khayr and that as the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said, “When Allāh loves a people He puts them through trial. So whomsoever is pleased with that (those trials when they come), then for them is the good pleasure of Allāh. And whomsoever is displeased, then for them is the displeasure of Allāh.”

والحمد لله رب العالمين