

## The Test of Patience

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Every child born comes with a definite ending; death is an inevitable phenomenon for every birth, rather for every creation. Allāh ta‘ālā mentions in the Qur’ān, “Everything is going to perish except His Face (His Being).” (28:88)

“ *This phenomenon makes the world a temporary abode, a transitory station, one from where each one of us will depart some day or the other. ‘Every soul has to taste death...’ (3:185)*

Whilst living through this transitory period, we need to come to realities with the characteristics of this place and our objectives.

### Three Abodes

Allāh ta‘ālā has created three abodes: the world, Jannah and Jahannam.

Jannah is a place where there is no sign of adversity, difficulty grief or sorrow; there is only happiness and joy. In contrast, Jahannam is the place where one will not experience an iota of peace, joy, happiness or comfort; the dweller will at every breath experience only grief, sorrow and pain. The world is a place where one faces both conditions of adversity and privilege. He experiences good and bad times, hardships and ease, happiness and grief. The world in fact, is the place for test, and the former two are the places of result.

## Our Objective

Our ultimate objective in this world is acquiring the Happiness and Pleasure of Allāh which manifests with our submission and obedience to His every command, and abstinence from every prohibition.

Allāh ta‘ālā says:

“ *I did not create the Jinn and the human beings except for the purpose that they should worship Me. (51:56)*

*O people! Worship your Lord who created you and those before you, so that you may become God-fearing. (2:21)*

This obedience and submission is tested by the ever changing conditions we face whilst living in the world; happiness suddenly becomes sadness; joy turns into sorrow; peace becomes chaos and turmoil; laughter changes into crying. Allāh ta‘ālā says:

*So that He might test you as to who among you is better in deed. (11:7)*

*...The One who created death and life, so that He may test you as to which of you is better in his deeds. And He is the All-Mighty, the Most-Forgiving (67:2)*

In every condition, our obedience and submission is tested with sabr and shukr (patience and gratitude). Naturally, happiness and sadness are the only two conditions one experiences in life and hence sabr and shukr are two tests. Consequently, it is inevitable that we will face, at some point, a test of sabr.

## **The Test of Patience**

The coming of adverse conditions is definite; no one can claim that he has never faced a situation of adversity and he has only lived a life of ease and comfort. Allāh ta‘ālā states, “Surely We will test you with a bit of fear and hunger, and loss in wealth and lives and fruits, and give good tidings to the patient.” (2:155)

There will be tests of different kinds. Some may experience fear; fear of one’s life, fear upon one’s family, fear from enemies, fear of war etc. For others it maybe an experience of poverty in various shapes and forms; financial market crashes, unemployment, loss of wealth, bankruptcy etc. Some may face scenarios of family loss; death of close ones, children dying in tender age, still-born births or events where families are lost. For some, the test of patience is light; for some it is intense; everything evolves around the Wisdom of Allāh. Therefore, the one afflicted with a situation of adversity is being tested with sabr, and so should take on board the following points:

### **1. Sabr - A speciality of a Mu’min**

A test is given upon a claim. When a person claims to have completed a course, he is tested. When a person claims to have completed the medicine course, he will be tested for competency. Likewise, we have claimed to be believers of Allāh, lovers of Allāh, worshippers of Allāh. Hence, our claim cannot go without a test. It should not be a matter of surprise that non-believers are not tested; they have no claim to be tested upon. Allāh ta‘ālā says:

*Do people think that they will be left (at ease) only on their saying, ‘We believe’, and will not be put to any test? (29:2)*

*Do you think that you will enter Paradise while you have not yet been visited by (difficult) circumstances like those that were faced by the people who passed away before you? They were afflicted by hardship and suffering, and were so shaken down that the prophet, and those who believed with him, started saying, ‘When (will come) the help of Allāh?’ (Then, they were comforted by the Prophet who said to them) ‘Behold, the help of Allāh is near.’ (2:214)*

The believers are the claimers; hence they will be tested with sabr. Non-believers are given respite, and when their time will lapse they only have doom to face.

Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam describes the believers with a plant that sways with the wind and the non-believers with a Cedar tree. The tree does not sway with the winds and withholds, however when an extremely strong wind blows, it is uprooted, never to get up again. (At-Tirmidhī)

The plant sways left to right; it may even flatten out to the ground, but will not uproot in the most adverse conditions. When conditions mellow out, it will once again become upright. Similar is the believer and a non-believer. The winds of difficulties will make the believer sway left and right, and afflictions and difficulties will frequent, but he/she will always come up again and succeed, whereas the non-believer will remain upright and enjoy life, but when Allāh’s Wrath descends, he/she will be uprooted and will never be able to stand up again. Hence, an adverse condition followed by steadfastness with patience is a positive sign of true Faith.

## 2. Become a Sābir (a patient person)

The description of the patient has been described by Allāh ta‘ālā as, “Who, when a suffering visits them, say, ‘We certainly belong to Allāh, and to Him we are bound to return.’” (2:156)

The essence of this is that they have no complaints in their hearts and minds; rather they turn solely to Allāh and regard every situation to be from Allāh.

Every person, at some point, comes to terms with their situation, be it after a few days, a week, or a month. Why not attain the title of Sābir by exercising patience from the very onset? Rasūlullāh sallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam states, “The (real) patience is at the first instant of grief.” (Al-Bukhārī)

## 3. Glad tidings for a Sābir

In adverse conditions, a believer will definitely succeed because of his Faith in Allāh, and therefore Allāh grants him the glad tidings:

“*Surely We will test you with a bit of fear and hunger, and loss in wealth and lives and fruits, and give good tidings to the patient: those are the ones upon whom there are blessings from their Lord, and mercy as well; and those are the ones who are on the right path for the Hereafter. (2:155-6)*

In this verse, Allāh states that a Sābir gains three rewards: special mercies from Allāh, general mercies of Allāh and hidāyah. What great rewards for the patient! ‘Umar radhiyallāhu ‘anhu used to say, “How great are the ‘idlān, and how great is the ‘ilāwah!” (Al-Bukhārī)

In those times, a traveller would carry his provisions in sacks tied to the sides of his conveyance and a bundle in his lap. ‘Idlān are the sacks which are tied on either side of the conveyance, and ‘ilāwah is the bundle one places in his lap. A traveller having all three sacks full would be regarded as one with a lot of provisions, and hence ‘Umar radhiyallāhu ‘anhu is describing the three rewards as ‘idlān and ‘ilāwah, denoting a patient person to have acquired a vast provision.

Allāh states, “Certainly those who observe patience will be given their reward in full without measure.” (39:10)

## 4. Think positive

Every grief and adversity has some form of positive aspect to it. It is only a person’s misfortune that he/she fails to perceive it. When afflicted with some form of predicament, one should think of the positive aspects instead of crying, wailing and moaning. Hereunder are some aspects one can think along:

**a. Think of the Wisdom of Allāh.** Allāh mentions in the Qur’ān, “It could be that you dislike something, when it is good for you; and it could be that you like something when it is bad for you. Allāh knows, and you do not know.” (2:216)

Only Allāh is the Knower of everything and He understands the wisdom behind our predicament. At times we regard an adversity to be a setback, a problem, and a loss. However, as time passes we begin to realise the great gain, opportunity, advantages and benefits we have actually attained as a result of the very adversity. To the extent that we find ourselves commenting, ‘The greatest event that happened for me was this... (the very adverse condition).’

**b. Think of the spiritual benefits.** One aspect of spiritual benefits is the rewards one will attain. The other is the spirituality one attains from being patient. A person gains proximity to Allāh by way of Mujāhadah (spiritual struggle). This mujāhadah is of two types: voluntary and involuntary. The proximity to Allāh one attains from involuntary mujāhadah, cannot be attained through voluntary mujāhadah. Furthermore, from the involuntary mujāhdah, the proximity a person attains from the affliction of grief, cannot be attained from any other involuntary struggle or difficulty one is faced with.

**c. Think of the positive changes that have occurred in your Dīnī life, such as tawbah, the realisation of the temporary world, the heart becoming inclined towards Allāh, and the waking up from negligence with regards to Dīnī matters.**

**d. In many situations, people feel sorry and sympathise with us, and begin to make du’ā for us. This would not have been attained had a calamity not occurred.**

At times of adversity, the test of sabr is not confined to the one afflicted, rather it becomes a means of test for those around them. In such situations, everyone has a role to play. Therefore, when seeing a person in a difficult condition, we should keep in mind certain points, which I will discuss in the next issue inshā’allāh.

Courtesy: Riyādul Jannah