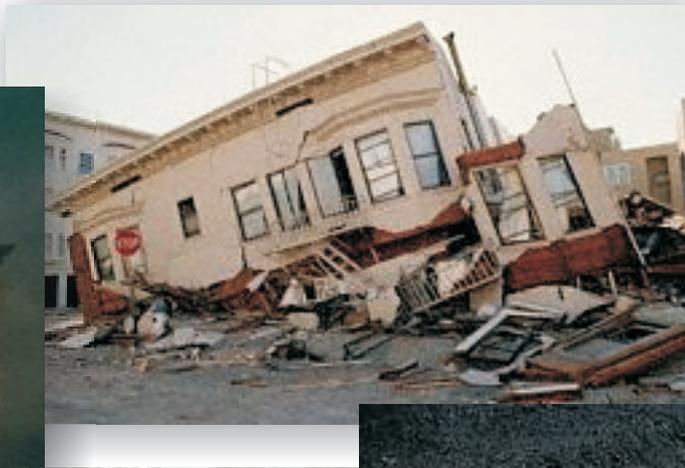


بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Worldly Difficulties

Reality **Causes** Benefits

By Shawana. A. Aziz

References: Imam Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah's (*rahimahullah*) book 'Ighathat Al-Lahfan min Masa-ed Ash-Shaytan' meaning, "Saving the Weary From the Traps of Shaytan.", Informative answers given by Shaikh Salih al-Munajjad (*hafizahullah*), Tafseer Ibn Katheer, explanation of Forty Hadeeth an-Nawawi by Shaikh Nathim Sultan, Fate in Islam by Saleh as-Saleh, Patience and gratitude by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah translated by Nasiruddin al-Khattab, Sickness Regulations and Exhortations by Muhammad al-Jibaly, and others.

Worldly difficulties are an inevitable part of life and a form of trial from Allah. They range from simple problems to fatal diseases and loss of one's beloved.

Yet in difficulties too, lies good for the believer!!

The disbelievers see afflictions as mere inconvenience, but for the believer trials are an opportunity to strengthen the bond with Allah. If the believer endures the calamity with patience, Allah, the All Merciful, rewards him abundantly, expiates his sins and elevates his ranks in Jannah. "Surely We will test you with fear, hunger, loss of wealth and life and the fruits of your work, but give glad tidings to the patient - those who, when afflicted with a calamity say, 'to Allah we belong and to Him we shall return.' Those are the ones upon whom are bestowed blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the ones who are (truly) guided." [Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 155] On the other hand, disbelievers are truly in loss, because their being patient on calamities neither brings them blessings in this life nor good in the Hereafter. Allah says: "And don't be weak in the pursuit of the enemy; if you are suffering (hardships) then surely, they (too) are suffering (hardships) as you are suffering, but you have a hope from Allah (for the reward, i.e. Paradise) that for which they hope not..." [Soorah an-Nisa (4): 104]

Therefore, appropriate behavior and the right attitude could change

adversity to a worthwhile opportunity of achieving bliss!

LIFE of the World is a **TRAIL**

Allah, the Exalted, tests His slaves with calamities and blessings, "...And We shall make a trial of you with evil and with good. And to Us you will be returned." [Soorah al-Ambiya (21): 35] Whosoever succeeds in this test, Paradise will be his reward. Allah says: "Do you think you will enter Paradise before Allah tests those of you who fought (in His Cause) and (also) tests those who are patient?" [Soorah aali-Imran (3): 142]

Complete **TRUST** in Allah's Decision

It is an integral part of the Muslim's Faith (Eemaan) to believe that everything Allah chooses for him; evil or good, pleasure or affliction, is for the slave's benefit. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **“By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, Allah does not ordain a Decree for a believer but for his good; and this merit is for no one except a believer...”** [Saheeh Muslim]

It is beyond human understanding to completely comprehend the Divine Wisdom behind every affliction because our knowledge is limited only to the apparent event. Allah Alone knows how things will turn out in the end, and how it will benefit the slave. So, the calamity that appears to be evil may lead to many favorable benefits. Allah says in the Qur'aan, **“...it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows (what is best for you) and you do not.”** [Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 216]

The above-mentioned verse directly follows the command of striving in the Path of Allah. Allah explains - although people dislike hardships and sacrifices; it is for the benefit of the Muslims because striving in the Path of Allah will be followed by good (i.e. victory), else Allah's enemies will dominate the Muslims causing them harm in their religion and their worldly affairs. **“...Allah knows (what is best for you), and you do not.”** [Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 216] Thus, a Muslim must always expect good from Allah and trust His Decision and Judgment with regard to every aspect of life. Allah has promised that if the believers put their complete trust in Allah, then Allah will suffice them, **“Whoever trusts in Allah, will find Him sufficient. Verily, Allah will accomplish His purpose.”** [Soorah at-Talaq (65): 3]

The Qur'aan gives us the example of the Prophet Yaqub's ﷺ strong trust in Allah. He ﷺ

had very handsome children. When he sent his children to Egypt; he instructed them to enter Egypt through different gates because he feared evil eye for them. **“And he said: 'O my son! Do not enter by one gate, but enter by different gates...’** and then he ﷺ says, **“...I cannot avail you against Allah. The decision rests only with Allah. I put my trust in Him alone, and all who trust should only trust Him.”** [Soorah (12): 67] Meaning my precaution will not prevent Allah's Decision and appointed Decree, but I trust in Allah that whatever He chooses will be the best.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ explained that the believer should always be satisfied with the Decree of Allah. He should be pleased and thankful to Allah when he is granted ease and pleasure of life. Likewise, he should become patient when calamities afflict him. He ﷺ said: **“...If he (the believer) is granted ease of living, he is thankful; and this is best for him. And if he is afflicted with a hardship, he perseveres; and this is best for him.”** [Saheeh Muslim]

You will be tried according to your **ABILITY**

Allah has designated afflictions and calamities for every human being according to his ability and Eemaan (faith). It would be unjust if everybody was tested on similar adversity and then punished for failure, because some people are more capable of enduring hardships than others. It is from Allah's Justice, Mercy, Compassion and Kindness towards His creation that He tests His slaves according to their ability and then punishes them for their sins accordingly. It is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'aan: **“Allah does not burden any soul, more than what it can bear. He gets reward for that (good) which he has earned, and he is punished for that (evil) which he has earned.”** [Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 286]

Based on this rule of Allah's Justice, scholars have ruled patience as obligatory. Since calamities afflict every person according to

his/her ability, then the person certainly has the ability to endure the hardship and become patient. It becomes prohibited for him to show impatience, or show extreme excitement, anger, or do actions or say words which might show disagreeing with Allah's Decree, like wailing, tearing clothes, slapping cheeks, etc. He will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment for all those prohibited acts, which he is capable of protecting himself from. Imam Bukharee (*rahimahullah*) has recorded in his Saheeh from Abu Musa al-Ansari that the Prophet ﷺ has declared himself free from him who wails at the time of affliction, one who shaves the head at the time of affliction (as an act of expressing grief), and the one who tears clothes at the time of affliction. All such acts are forbidden according to the consensus of the scholars. However, Allah does not punish His slaves for actions, which are beyond his control. For example, one does not have much control over tears and emotions of the heart. One may experience sorrow and grief due to loss of something adored or departure of one's beloved. Allah will not punish the slave for the tears and sorrow of the heart, but it is necessary for the slave to dislike every evil thought that crosses his mind and prevent the tongue from saying anything which may mean displeasure with Allah's Decree. Allah's Messenger ﷺ visited his companion, Sa'd Ibn Ubadah, who was ill and along with him were some of his Companions. Allah's Messenger ﷺ wept on seeing Sa'd Ibn Ubadah and when the others saw him weep they also wept. The Prophet ﷺ then said: **“Listen! Allah does not punish due to the tears of the eyes or the sorrow of the heart, but He punishes because of this** (and he pointed to his tongue) **or He shows mercy.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee]

Also, when Ibraheem, the son of Allah's Messenger ﷺ, was at his last breath, he ﷺ went to him and his eyes filled with tears. Abdur-Rahman Ibn Auf ؓ said to him: 'Even you, O Messenger of Allah ﷺ (weep)!’ The Prophet ﷺ replied: **“O Ibn Auf, it is mercy.”** Then he wept some more, and said: **“The eye weeps and the heart sorrows and we do not say anything except what is pleasing to our Lord. By your leaving, O Ibraheem, we are sorrowed.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee]

Whatever occurred to you could not have **MISSED** you

Nothing takes place on the earth, except that it is inscribed in *al-Lawh al-Mahfoodh* or 'the Preserved Tablet.' Allah, the Exalted, has recorded everything about the creation; livelihood, provisions, ages, deeds, etc. in *Al-Lawh al-Mahfoodh* fifty thousands years before He created them. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **“Allah had written the ordained measures (and due proportions) of the creation, fifty-thousand years before the creation of the Heavens and the Earth...”** [Saheeh Muslim] Similarly, every calamity that befalls the slave has been pre-ordained by Allah. **“No disaster strikes upon the earth or within yourselves but was recorded in a Book (*al-Lawh al-Mahfoodh*) before We bring it into existence. Verily, this is easy for Allah...”** [Soorah Hadid (57): 22-23] Allah states the reason behind pre-ordainment (in the next verses of Soorah Hadid) that the slave should not despair if some calamity afflicts, nor become proud and haughty on achieving some good, because every calamity that befell him was previously designed for him and all blessings are from Allah Alone. Thus, whatever reached him could not have missed him and whatever missed him could not have reached him. This belief is an essential part of Eemaan (faith), when Allah's Messenger ﷺ was asked: “What is Imaan?” He ﷺ replied: **“Eemaan is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day and to believe in Predestination the good and the bad.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee and Saheeh Muslim]

Alongside, the slave should also refrain from over speculation and conjecture, like saying, 'if I had done such and such... the result would have been different...' or '...I would have been saved from this calamity...' etc. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **“...and if anything (in the form of trouble) comes to you, don't say, if I had not done that, it would not have happened so and so, but say, Allah did that what He had ordained to do and your 'if' opens the**

gate for Shaytan.” [Saheeh Muslim (6441)] Allah, the Exalted, has promised to guide the hearts of the believers and grant tranquility, if they refrain from speculation. Allah says: **“No disaster strikes except by Allah's Permission, and whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart, Allah is the Knower of all things.”** [Soorah at-Taghabun (64): 11] Ibn Abbas ؓ said Allah's guiding the heart of the slave means that Allah will guide his heart to certainty. Therefore, he will know that what reached him would not have missed him, and what has missed him would not have reached him. [at-Tabari 23: 421]

Imam Ibn Katheer (*rahimahullah*) writes in his Tafseer, '...after suffering from an affliction, if the slave believes that it occurred by Allah's Judgment and Decree, and he patiently abides, awaiting Allah's reward, then Allah guides his heart and will compensate him for his loss in this life by granting guidance to his heart and certainty in faith. Allah will replace whatever he lost with the equal or what is better.'

Afflictions are a form of **BLESSING**

Apart from some hardships, afflictions bring about various benefits for the believer,

✪ Hardships teach the believer to be patient (*Sabr*) and Allah abundantly rewards the patient.

✪ Sufferings remind the sinful believer of the greatest affliction of life, i.e. death, which may afflict him any moment. It reminds him of the severe punishments, which may follow next, as a result of his disobedience to Allah. When one deviates, he seldom pays any heed to the advice of others, but when a calamity strikes him, he is reminded of Allah and His severe punishments. Allah says: **“We will make them taste a lesser punishment before the greater punishment that perhaps they may return (to the right path).”** [Soorah (32): 2] In this way, calamities give him the time to reflect over his sins and their awful outcome. As a result, he recognizes his errors and returns to Allah in

repentance. Thus, worldly difficulties serve as a blessing for the sinful.

✪ Hardships reduce the burden of sins from the believer and he becomes free from the severe and unbearable punishments of the Hereafter. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **“Afflictions continue to befall believing men and women in their body, family and property, until they meet Allah burdened with no sins.”** [(Saheeh) by Shaikh al-Albanee in Saheehah (2280) at-Tirmidhee] **“No stress or exhaustion befalls the Muslim, nor worry or distress, even a thorn which pricks him, but Allah will expiate for his sins because of that.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee and Saheeh Muslim]

Sufferings of this world are very less and insignificant when compared to the harsh punishments of the Hereafter. Moreover, the sufferings of this world come to an end upon death, but the punishments of the Hereafter are eternal!! However, Allah, the All Merciful, forgives much sin, He says in the Qur'aan: **“Whatever befalls you is a result of what your hands have earned. And He pardons much.”** [Soorah ash-Shura (42): 30] If Allah had punished us for all our evil deeds, then everything on the Earth would have been destroyed. Allah says in Soorah Faatir, He said: **“And if Allah were to punish men for that which they earned, He would not leave a moving (living) creature on the face of the Earth, but He gives respite to an appointed term...”** [Soorah Faatir (35): 45] It is from the immense Mercy of Allah that He pardons much of our evil deeds and He has made the insignificant afflictions of this life as atonement for the harsh and severe punishments of the Hereafter. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: **“When Allah wills good for a servant of His, He expedites his punishments in this life, and when He wills retribution for a servant of His, He holds his sins for him to judge him by them on the Day of Judgment.”** [(Saheeh) by Shaikh al-Albanee in Saheeh al-Jamee (308) at-Tirmidhee]

✪ Difficulties establish submission and humbleness in the believer. For example, when

a believer becomes sick, he realizes his weakness and need for Allah, and he invokes Him for health. Consequently, when Allah grants him health, he becomes thankful to Him for relieving him from the hardship and strives harder in his worship. Had he remained healthy always, he would have become arrogant and proud. Likewise, if he had remained sick always, he would not have had the opportunity to worship Allah and be grateful to Him.

These and many other benefits of worldly difficulties together bring about numerous blessings for the believer. Besides, worldly difficulties are necessary for the spiritual growth of the believer since they purify him from sins, help him sincerely worship Allah and establish his Deen (religion). It is for this reason that the Prophets ﷺ and their followers were pleased when afflicted with hardships. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: **“The Prophets are afflicted the most, then the righteous. Indeed, one of them would be tested with poverty, so that he would not be able to wear anything except a coarse cloak. And indeed, they used to be pleased with affliction as you would with comfort.”** [(Saheeh) by Shaikh al-Albanee in as-Saheehah (144) Ibn Majah and others] Knowing these various benefits of worldly difficulties make it easier for the believer to be patient and endure the hardships.

The believer should **NOT WISH** for Calamities

It might seem appropriate to wish and endure worldly difficulties in return for the various benefits, rewards and freedom from the punishments of the Hereafter. However, although worldly difficulties are a source of various benefits for the believer, Allah, the Exalted has prohibited His slaves from wishing for calamities. Firstly because Allah Alone knows best how much hardship His slaves can bear and accordingly He has designated sufferings for them. If one was to ask for more difficulties, he is likely to fall into ingratitude and disbelief! Moreover, it is not possible for anyone to endure the punishment of his sins in this life. Instead, the believer should take

advantage of Allah's Mercy, ask forgiveness and safeguard his Eemaan. Anas ؓ reported that Allah's Messenger * once visited a Muslim man who was so weak that he was (thin) like a chicken, as described in the Hadeeth. Allah's Messenger ﷺ asked him, **“Did you make a specific supplication or ask Allah for something (so that you became like this)?”** He replied: 'Yes, I used to say, 'O Allah! Whatever punishment you have for me in the Hereafter, expedite it for me in this life.' Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: **“Exalted be Allah! You cannot withstand that. You should have said instead, 'Rabbana aatina fid-dunya hasanah, wa fil-akhirati hasanah waqina azab an-Naar' 'Our Lord, grant us good in this life and in the next life, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire.”** [Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 201] He ﷺ then implored Allah to cure him, and Allah cured him.' [Saheeh Muslim]

Secondly, wishing for calamities would conflict with the easy and forgiving nature of Islam. We are instructed to ask for our well being and forgiveness. Allah, the Exalted, has taught this prayer in the Qur'aan: **“O Lord! Do not put on us a burden like what you placed on those before us.”** [Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 286]

If Allah grants **EASE...**

The believer should be thankful to Allah, if he is granted ease and comfort but nevertheless he should not consider it to be a result of his piety and righteousness. Because worldly difficulties are not the trial alone; prosperity, wealth and well being are also part of the test. Allah says: **“...And We shall make a trial of you with evil and with good...”** [Soorah al-Ambiya (21): 35] meaning, 'We shall test you sometimes with difficulties and sometimes with ease, to see who will give thanks and who will be ungrateful, who will be patient and who will despair.' Ali Ibn Abi Talib ؓ reported from Ibn Abbas ؓ that Allah will test you with difficulties and with times of prosperity, with health and sickness, with richness and poverty, with lawful and unlawful, obedience and sin, with guidance and misguidance.” [See Tafseer Ibn Katheer]

BLESSING or PUNISHMENT?

Where patience and submission in times of difficulties can bring rewards and blessings for the believer, displeasure and impatience can incur Allah's Wrath and Punishment on the slave. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: **“The magnitude of the reward is in accordance with the magnitude of the affliction. When Allah loves some people, He afflicts them. He who is then content (with Allah's Decree) will achieve the acceptance (of Allah); and he who is dissatisfied (with Allah's Decree) will attain the anger (of Allah).”** [(Saheeh) by Shaikh al-Albanee in as-Saheehah (146) at-Tirmidhee] So, a simple act of the slave and his behavior towards difficulties can change a worthwhile opportunity of achieving bliss into sufferings, or misery into blessings and rewards!

Towards achieving Allah's Pleasure and Blessings

SABR Patience

'*Sabr*' is an Arabic word coming from a root meaning, to detain, refrain and stop. In the Islamic terminology, '*Sabr*' means to stop oneself from despairing and panicking, to stop the tongues from complaining, and to stop the hands from striking face and tearing clothes at times of grief and stress. Those who possess the quality of '*Sabr*' indeed possess a great blessing of Allah. Allah's Messenger ﷺ is reported to have said: **“No one is given anything better and more encompassing than patience.”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee] Allah, the Exalted, has promised a reward that will not be weighed or measured for the *Saabiroon* (those who exhibit *Sabr*). He said: **“Only those who are patient shall receive their rewards in full, without reckoning.”** [Soorah az-Zumar (39): 10] However, the true *Sabr* for which Allah has promised **rewards without reckoning** is at the beginning of the calamity, when one first hears the news of affliction and in spite of the hearts sorrows; the slave does not panic or despair, instead he exhibits patience and satisfaction with the Decree of Allah. Patience after the initial shock when the grief has already

reduced is not true *Sabr* because the real test of patience is when the person is grieved by the calamity. The Prophet ﷺ said, **“Verily patience (is only *Sabr* when practiced) at the first hit (of news).”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee]

Every person has to practice patience, willingly or unwillingly! The wise person is he who practices patience willingly and from the beginning because he understands the benefits of patience; he knows that he will be rewarded for his patience and will be criticized if he panics. He is aware that impatience and despair can neither bring back missed opportunities nor change the Decree of Allah - Whereas the foolish person is he who only practices patience when he finds no other choice after despairing and complaining and this *Sabr* does not bring him any reward.

IHTISAB

Looking forward to Allah's reward and forgiveness for every affliction, regardless of its pain and suffering is called *Ihtisab*. Paradise is the only reward for *Ihtisab*. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: **“When Allah takes away from His believing servant his beloved one of the people of the Earth, if he displays patience**

and *Ihtisab*, Allah will then not accept any reward for him less than *Jannah* (Paradise).” [Saheeh al-Bukharee]

Let us take the example of Aasiyah, the wife of Firawn. Aasiyah was severely tortured by her husband, who was a king, because she accepted the Oneness of Allah. In spite of the severe anguish and pain, Aasiyah persisted in her faith, displayed immense patience and practiced *Ihtisab*. She prayed to Allah and asked Him for a home in Paradise. Allah mentions her story in the Qur'aan, “**And Allah has set forth an example for those who believe, the wife of Firawn, when she said: 'My Lord! Build for me a home with You in Paradise and save me from Firawn and his work, and save me from the people who are wrongdoers.'**” [Soorah at-Tahrim (66): 11] When she made this *Du'aa*, the sky opened for her and she saw her home in Paradise. She smiled. Firawn commanded a big rock to be brought and dropped on Aasiyah in order to crush her to death. But Allah took her soul before the rock was dropped. So, Allah granted Aasiyah two blessings for her *Ihtisab*; a home in Paradise and protection from the cunning plans of Firawn. And she became an example for all those who will come after her until the Day of Judgment. [See at-Tabari 23: 500]

ISTIRJA

Expressing Allah's Lordship and submission to His Decree by words, i.e. saying '*Inna lillahi wa Inna Ilaihi Raji'un*' which means, 'Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we shall return.'

Allah says: “**Surely We will test you with fear, hunger, loss of wealth and life and the fruits of your work but give glad tidings to the patient - those who, when afflicted with a calamity say, 'Inna lillahi wa Inna Ilaihi Raji'un.'** Those are the ones upon whom are bestowed blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the ones who are (truly) guided.” [Soorah al-Baqarah (2): 155]

Umm Salamah (*radhi allahu anha*) reported that she heard Allah's Messenger ﷺ say, “**Whenever an affliction strikes a believer and he says, 'Inna lillahi wa Inna Ilaihi Raji'un. Allahum majurni fi musibati wakhluḥ li khayran minha** Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return. O Allah! Reward me for my calamity, and replace it for me that which is better.” Allah will surely reward him for it and replace it for him with a better thing.” Umm Salamah (*radhi allahu anha*) added, 'So, when Abu Salamah (her husband) died, Allah enabled me to say this (*Du'aa*), and He replaced him for me with Allah's Messenger ﷺ.' [Saheeh Muslim]

SHAKWAH

Complaining

Shakwah (complaining) falls into two categories; (a) the first type is to complain to Allah and this does not contradict patience. A number of examples of *Shakwah* to Allah can be found in the Qur'aan, one of which is the complaining of Yaqub عليه السلام, who said: “**I complain of my distraction and anguish to Allah.**” [Soorah Yusuf (12): 86]

(b) The second type of *Shakwah* involves complaining to people, either directly, through words or indirectly through the way we look and behave, like dressing shabbily, shaving the head, displaying distress, etc. all in order to show one's grief and pain. This type of *Shakwah* is contradictory to *Sabr* because it implies disagreeing with Allah's Decree and lack of trust in Him. However, one may mention his suffering to specific people like close friends. Ibn Mas'oud رضي الله عنه reported that he visited the Prophet ﷺ when he was sick; he touched him with his hand, and felt the fever. He said: 'You have a severe fever.' He replied: “**Yes, I suffer from fever as much as would two men among you!**” [Saheeh al-Bukharee and Saheeh Muslim]

Another Aspect of Worldly Difficulties!

In what has preceded, we understand that worldly difficulties are a trial, during which the believer is required to be patient and submit to Allah's Decree. Apart from this, some afflictions are also a result of the believer's sins and evil deeds. They are a punishment from Allah, and a warning to shun evil deeds and return back to Allah in repentance. **“Whatever of misfortune befalls you is a result of what your hands have earned...”** [Soorah ash-Shura (42): 30]

It is very important to clearly understand this aspect of worldly difficulties and give it due consideration. Because if the slaves do not pay heed to the admonitions and warnings of Allah, then the Qur'aan is a witness that Allah severely punished the past nations who had transgressed from the path of Allah and He subsequently destroyed them... Allah punished the disbelievers at the time of Noah ﷺ with a terrible flood, and He decided to send an awful wind storm at the people of Hud ﷺ as a penalty, a disastrous earthquake seized the arrogant at the time of Salih ﷺ and lay them dead, the people of Lut - Allah turned them upside down and rained on them stones of baked clay... These and other stories of the past nations warn us about the bad consequences of disobeying Allah and disregarding His admonitions, Allah says: **“Let those who contradict his (the Messenger's ﷺ) command beware of a trial or a severe punishment.”** [Soorah an-Nur (24): 63]

Punishments can be in various forms. Perhaps, today what seems the most obvious punishment afflicting mankind is the disease of AIDS, which appeared for the first time in medical history in the 80's and is the world's most frightening killer disease. AIDS is a fatal disease that weakens the resistance of body and makes it defenseless against all kinds of infections. Anyone who develops AIDS will die within a few years. AIDS is spread mainly due to

indiscriminate sexual activity, homosexuality and drug abuse. All of which is transgressing the limits setup by Allah, which restricts sexual relations within the bounds of marriage.

Some may argue that AIDS is not limited to the sinful people but has also spread among the chaste individuals. The Qur'aan replies that when the punishment of Allah comes, it is not limited only to the sinful, but afflicts the society as a whole. Allah says: **“Beware of a trial which will not afflict only the sinful among you, and know that Allah is severe in punishment.”** [Soorah Anfal (8): 25]

AIDS is only one in the series of calamities and adversities afflicting mankind. Today, we hear of a number of novel diseases, unexpected storms, floods, earthquakes, etc. taking place in different parts of the world. These punishing reminders also come in the form of oppression from the Kuffar, like what is happening today in many parts of the world; the Muslims are being oppressed and subjugated to hardships by the Kuffar and their tyranny. This is a result of our disobediences to Allah that we are surrounded by hardships and adversities. Allah is warning us and know that the only way out is to refrain from violating the laws of Allah and restricting oneself within the bounds of Islam. The Qur'aan says: **“Corruption has appeared on the land and in the sea because of what man's hands have earned in order that (Allah) may make them taste a part of what they have done, and in order that they may return (to the right path).”** [Soorah ar-Rum (30): 41] We should greatly consider these warnings and hasten towards repentance, and depart from all such acts, which may become the cause of our destruction. We should work towards righteousness and please our Lord before it is too late - and we get caught up in such punishments that it becomes difficult for us to escape them!!

“Whatever of misfortune befalls you is a result of what your hands have earned...”

[Soorah ash-Shura (42): 30]

Calling on to Allah Alone in times of Afflictions

When difficulty and hardship befall, people run towards tombs and graves in search of help and relief. We find them invoking the Prophets ﷺ and the engraved to remove their hardships. Allah says about them, **“And who is more astray than one who calls (invokes) besides Allah, such as will not answer him till the Day of Resurrection, and who are (even) unaware of their calls (invocations) to them?”** [Soorah al-Ahqaf (46): 5]

It would be enough to mention only one Hadeeth of Allah's Messenger ﷺ to prove the futility of their action. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: **“Those who are most afflicted among the people are the Prophets, then the best, then the (next) best. One is afflicted in accordance with (the strength of) his Deen. If his Deen is firm, his affliction is hard, and if his Deen is weak, his affliction is light. Indeed, one would be so much subjected to adversity until he walks among the people without any sin.”** [(Saheeh) by Shaikh al-Albanee in Saheeh al-Jamee (993) Musnad Ahmad and at-Tirmidhee]

Apart from explaining that Prophets are afflicted the most and then the best and then the best, this Hadeeth is a proof for Tawheed (Oneness of Allah). If one knows that the Prophets and the righteous people are also afflicted with calamities and they suffer more than the common believers. None can remove these afflictions from them except Allah - Then he will completely understand that if they cannot bring benefit nor prevent harm from themselves - so how can they ward off evil from others!! Consequently, it is established that turning towards the Prophets and Awliya (righteous) to eliminate distress is futile and

hopeless, rather one should turn towards Allah, who Alone is able to remove all harm.

Allah mentions the story of Prophet Ayub ؑ, who was tested with regards his wealth, children, and physical health. He had plenty of livestock, cattle and crops, many children and beautiful houses, and he was tested when he lost everything he possessed. Then he was tested with regards to his body, and he was left alone on the edge of the city, no one to treat him apart from his wife. But Prophet Ayub ؑ had the utmost patience and trust in Allah; thus he invoked Allah alone for help: **“And remember Ayub when he cried to his Lord, 'Verily, distress has seized me, and You are the Most Merciful of all those who show mercy.’”** [Soorah al-Ambiya (21): 83] Allah says: **“So, We answered his call, and we removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his family to him, and the like thereof with them as a mercy from ourselves and a reminder for all those who worship Us.”** [Soorah al-Ambiya (21): 84]

The Qur'aan clearly states that those who are dead cannot help the living. Therefore, anyone who calls upon the dead is surely a loser. Furthermore, invoking someone other besides Allah is committing Shirk (associating partners with Allah) the most evil crime because supplication is worship, and thus it is the Right of Allah Alone. Allah says: **“Invoke Me and I will respond to your (invocation)' Verily, those who scorn My worship, will enter Hell in humiliation.”** [Soorah al-Ghaafir (40): 60] while explaining this verse the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **“Supplication is worship.”** [Sunan of Abu-Dawood (1474)]

“And if Allah touches you with hurt, there is none who can remove it but He, and if He intends any good for you, there is none who can repel His Favor which He causes it to reach whomsoever of His slaves He will. And He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [Soorah Yunus (10): 107]

If the slaves secure the Right of Allah (i.e. worship Him Alone), then Allah has promised to save them from His punishments and pardon their sins, as is manifest from the following Hadeeth. Narrated Muadh bin Jabal ؓ: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ: **“O Muadh! Do you know what is the right of Allah on His slaves?”** I (Muadh bin Jabal) said: "Allah and His Messenger ﷺ knows best." The Prophet ﷺ said: **“(the right of Allah on His slaves is) to worship Him (Allah) Alone and join none (as partners with Him) in worship with Him.”** Then he ﷺ asked: **“Do you know what is their (slaves) right upon Him?”** I replied: "Allah and His Messenger ﷺ knows best." The Prophet ﷺ said: **“Not to punish them (if they worship Him alone).”** [Saheeh al-Bukharee vol.9, no.470 and Saheeh Muslim]

Allah's Messenger ﷺ in his advice Ibn Abbas ؓ said: **“...I'hfath (remember or observe the commands of) Allah and He will Ya'hfath (direct His care and aid at) you. I'hfath Allah and you will find Him with you (by His aid, knowledge and protection). When you invoke, invoke Allah alone, and when you ask for help, ask Allah alone. And know that if the nation (meaning mankind and the Jinn) came together to bring you benefit, they can never bring you any**

benefit except that which Allah has written for you. And if they came together to harm you, they will never be able to harm you, except what Allah has written for you. The pens have already been raised (and stopped writing) and the pages have dried.” [Musnad Ahmad and at-Tirmidhee]

He ﷺ also said: **“No Muslim supplicates to Allah with a Du'aa that does not involve sin or cutting the relations of the womb, but Allah will grant him one of the three things. He will either hasten the response to his supplication, save it for him until the Hereafter, or would turn an equivalent amount of evil away from him.”** They (the Sahabah ؓ) said: “What if we were to recite more (Du'aa).” He ﷺ said: **“There is more with Allah.”** [Musnad Ahmad vol: 3, no: 18]

It also occurs in a Hadeeth of Allah's Messenger ﷺ: **“No precaution can protect against the decree of Allah. Du'aa is beneficial with regard to what has been decreed and what has not been decreed. The Du'aa meets the calamity that has been decreed and wrestles with it, until the Day of Resurrection.”** [Narrated by al-Tabarane. Shaikh al-Albane classified this Hadeeth as Hasan in Saheeh al-Jamee, (7739)]

Distinguishing between Trial and Punishment!!



If the affliction results from acts of obedience to Allah, such as injury in Jihad, losing money during Hijrah (migrating for the sake of Allah), losing a job because of accepting Islam or because one attempts to follow the Sunnah of Allah's Messenger ﷺ like growing beard, wearing the lower garment above the ankles, etc. then the affliction is a trial. Whoever bears it with patience will be rewarded and whoever exhibits annoyance will evoke the wrath of Allah upon him.



If the affliction befalls due to sinful actions, such as illnesses caused by drinking alcohol and using drugs, etc. then the affliction is a punishment from Allah. Hasten to avoid all sinful acts and turn towards Allah in repentance and ask his forgiveness. Otherwise, know that the punishments of the Hereafter are far more severe and unbearable.



If the affliction is neither connected to a good deed nor a sin such as other kinds of disease and sickness, losing a child, or failing in business, then you should judge your actions. If you are involved in some kind of disobedience to Allah then the affliction is a punishment for you and a reminder to leave your evil deeds. Otherwise, Allah has caused this affliction to test your patience.

ALWAYS REMEMBER!!

- Hardships and Ease are a Trial for you.
- Everything Allah chooses for you; from good or evil, is for your benefit.
- Whatever occurred to you could not have missed you and what missed you could never have reached you.
- Sabr (Patience) is obligatory.
- Rewards are only for those who become patient with the Decree of Allah.
- Panicking and impatience cannot prevent the Decree of Allah.
- Shakwah (Complaining) is contradictory to Sabr.
- Allah Alone can protect you from harm and ease your difficulties.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: “One amongst the inhabitants of Hell, who had lived a life of ease and pleasure in the world would be made to dip in the Hell Fir only once on the Day of Resurrection. Then it would be asked, 'O son of Adam, Did you find any comfort. Did you get any blessing?' He would say: 'By Allah, no, my Lord!'

Then a person, from the inhabitants of Paradise, who had led the most miserable life (in the world) would be made to dip once in Paradise and it would be said to him, 'O son of Adam, Did you face any hardship or experience any distress?' He would say: 'By Allah! No never have I experienced any hardship or distress.’
[Saheeh Muslim (6738)]

As-Sunnah

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