

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

Life in this world, even if we are believers is paved with trials. The Holy Quran reminds us of this in many verses and the most often quoted verse is

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ
الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

Translation:

And We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient,

Who, when a misfortune overtakes them, say, 'Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return.'

It is these on whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is these who are rightly guided. (2:155-157)

I am not reminding you of this verse to frighten you because if you read the Holy Quran you will meet plenty of similar verses. We are reminded so that we may heed and when we are confronted with some loss, we are ready to take it in good stride because we have already been conditioned to be prepared for such events happening in our life. Some people prefer to ignore such verses. But Allah reminds us that in life there is “ease and hardship” and that we have to be prepared to face hardships when they come.

From the book of hadiths, we have plenty of hadiths reminding us that we should be ready to face hardship in life. I will relate to you some of these hadiths. The Holy Prophet (saw) is reported to have said:

“Amazing is the affair of the believer. Definitely, all of his life is good and this is not for anybody except the believer. If something of good happens to him, he is grateful and that is good for him. If something harmful befalls him, he is patient and that is good for him.” (Saheeh Muslim)

“Be in this world like a stranger or a traveler passing by.” (Saheeh Bukhari)

“Young man, I will teach you some words. Be mindful of God, and He will take care of you. Be mindful of Him, and you shall find Him at your side. If you ask, ask of God. If you need help, seek it from God. Know that if the whole world were to gather together in order to help you, they would not be able to help you except if God had written so. And if the whole world were to gather together in order to harm you, they would not harm you except if God had written so. The pens have been lifted, and the pages are dry.” (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

“Allah the Almighty has said: ‘O Son of Adam, as long as you invoke Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O Son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and you then asked forgiveness from Me, I would forgive you. O Son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the Earth, and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it [too].” (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

“Verily Allah has pardoned for me my ummah: their mistakes, their forgetfulness, and that which they have been forced to do under duress.” (Ibn Majah)

“(The most severely tested people) are the prophets, then those closest to them in piety, then those closest to them in piety. A man is tried according to his religion. If he is firm in his religion, then his trials will be more severe. If he is weak in his religion, then he is tried according to his strength in religion. The servant will continue to be tried until he is left walking upon the earth without any sin.” (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

So, in the light of these verses and hadiths, we understand that trials form part of life and that we should be ever ready to face them with help from Allah once they manifest themselves. May Allah make each one amongst us among such people who face trials with equanimity by His Grace, incha Allah.

Allah has not left a believer without means to face trials. He has told us “*Oud’ouni astajib lakoum*” meaning “call upon Me and I will answer you”. So, it is our duty to keep soliciting Allah for His Help under all circumstances. When we read the Holy Quran, there are plenty of verses that remind us to do so. Moreover, every Friday, the participants are reminded that they have to pray to Allah and He will respond to their prayers. In the second Khutbah, the khatib reads “*wad’ouho yastajib lakoum*” meaning “call upon Him and He will respond to you”.

Now I will read to you some more extracts from the writings of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) which will remind me and you as well about some of the things that he said about prayer which is so to say the life blood of a Muslim. I am sharing these extracts because it helps to uplift us with great hope and prevents us from falling into despondence whatever the circumstances. He said:

“Man claims to worship God, but worship does not consist of a lot of prostrations and bowing and standing, or rotating the beads of a rosary countless times.

Worship means to be so drawn to God, out of love for Him, that one’s ego should disappear altogether. First, there should be firm faith in the existence of God and a full appreciation of His Beauty and Beneficence. Then there should be such love of God that the heart should ever feel its flame and this condition should be manifest all the time from one’s countenance. God’s greatness should so inspire the heart that the whole world should appear dead in comparison. His being should be the source of all fear. Pain endured for Him should be all joy, His company should be a source of delight, and

the heart should find no comfort with anyone other than Him. To reach such a condition is termed 'worship'; but it is not reached without the special help of God Almighty. That is why He has taught us the prayer: *Iyyaka na'bodo wa iyyaka nasta'eene*

That is, we do worship Thee, but how can we do justice to Thy worship until we receive Thy special help?

To worship God, having made Him one's True Beloved, is the essence of sainthood, which is the height of spiritual progress, but this cannot be achieved without His help. The indication of having achieved it is that God's greatness and love should be established in the heart and the heart should rely completely on Him and love Him alone. And he should prefer Him to everything and make His remembrance the purpose of his life. Such a person would be ready to carry out with the eagerness of love the most testing commands of God, even if, like Abraham (as), he is commanded to slaughter his own son or to jump into the fire. He will leave no stone unturned in obedience to God and in his eagerness to win His pleasure. This door is very narrow and this drink is very bitter. There are few who enter this door and drink of this bitter cup. It is no great thing to refrain from adultery or killing a person unlawfully; nor is it a great achievement to refrain from bearing false witness. But to prefer God to everything and to welcome every bitterness with true eagerness and out of true love for Him, and to create bitterness for oneself in this path, is a status which cannot be achieved by anyone except the truthful. This is the worship which is prescribed for man. When a person performs this worship, God responds to it with something which is called His bounty; as we are taught in the Holy Qur'an:

O Allah, guide us along Thy straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favour and have singularized them with Thy special Grace."

In another place he said:

"When a child being driven by hunger cries for milk, then milk is generated in the mother's breasts. The child does not know what prayer is, but his cries draw the milk. This is a universal experience. Sometimes when the mother does not perceive the presence of milk in her breasts, the child's cries help to draw it. Then can our cries before God Almighty draw nothing? They certainly draw everything. But those sightless ones, who parade themselves as scholars and philosophers, cannot see it. If a person were to reflect on the philosophy of prayer, keeping in mind the connection and relationship which a child has with its mother, he would find it easy to understand.

The second type of mercy comes into operation after supplication. Go on asking and you will go on receiving.

"Oud'ouni Astajib lakoum" "Call upon Me and I will respond to you"

is not mere verbiage, but is a characteristic of human nature. To supplicate is human to respond is Divine. He who does not understand and does not believe is false. The illustration of the child that I have set forth expounds the philosophy of prayer in an excellent way. [Malfuzat, vol. 1, pp. 129-130]

It is at a time of trial that the wonderful and rare qualities and effects of prayer are manifested. **The truth is that our God is recognized only through prayers.** [Malfuzat, vol. III, p. 201]

“Prayer is a wonderful thing. It is a pity that those who pray are not aware of the true manner of prayer, nor are they acquainted with the ways of the acceptance of prayer. The truth is that the very reality of prayer has become strange. There are some who deny the effectiveness of prayer altogether. There are others who do not deny it, but as their prayers are not accepted on account of their lack of knowledge of the manner of prayer and are not prayers in the true sense, their condition is worse than that of those who deny the effectiveness of prayer. Their practical condition has pushed many others to the verge of atheism.” We will continue incha Allah next week.

I had prepared this khutba on the day before yesterday. Yesterday in the morning I received the following message:

“Wa bassheril lazina aamanou wa amelous swalehaate anna lahoum qadama sidqin inda rabbehim wa houm elayhe rajeoune” which we translate as “Give glad tidings to those who believe and do good works that they have a [firm] precedence of honor in the sight of their lord and they will return to Him”. It confirms what I have been saying in the first part of the Khutba.

It is not exactly a verse of the Holy Quran. One will not find it as such in the Holy Book. In the Holy Quran, the only place where *qadama sidqin* is mentioned, is as follows: “Have the people been amazed that We revealed [revelation] to a man from among them, [saying], “Warn mankind and give good tidings to those who believe that they will have a [firm] precedence of honor with their Lord”? [But] the disbelievers say, “Indeed, this is an obvious magician.” (Surah Yunus 10: 2). The message that I have received is a composite of several words from the Holy Quran and the words and “those who do good deeds “have been added. Just belief is not sufficient. Allah knows best. May Allah help each one amongst us that we are and we remain worthy of all the glad tidings that we receive from him incha Allah.

May Allah help us all and bless us all. Ameen.