**Patience (Sabr)**



 We will certainly test you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and fruits (earnings); but give glad tidings to the persevering and patient. (al-Baqarah 2:155) (1)



O you who believe! Seek help (against all kinds of hardships and tribulations) through persevering patience and the Prayer; surely Allah is with the persevering and patient. (al-Baqarah 2:153) (2)

19. Suhayb ibn Sinan, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, ‘What an extraordinary thing the business of the believer is! All of it is good for him, and that only applies to the believer. If good fortune is his lot, he is grateful and it is good for him. If something harmful happens to him, he is steadfast and that is good for him too.’” (Sahih Muslim, Zuhd, 64). (3)

20. Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, passed by a woman who was weeping at a grave and said, ‘Fear Allah and show fortitude.’ She said, not recognising him, ‘Leave me alone. You have not been struck by such an affliction as mine!’ She was told, ‘It is the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.’ She went to the door of the Prophet and, finding no one guarding the door, she said, ‘I did not recognise you.’ He said, ‘The time for fortitude is at the first shock.’” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Janaiz, 32, 43; Ahkam, 11; Sahih Muslim, Janaiz, 14–15).(3)

27. Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “The strong man is not the one who throws people in wrestling. The strong man is the one who has control of himself when he is angry.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Adab, 102; Sahih Muslim, Birr, 106).(4)

**Sabr (Patience)**

Sabr literally means enduring, bearing, and resisting pain; suffering and difficulty; and dealing calmly with problems. In more general terms it means patience, which is one of the most important actions of the heart mentioned in the Qur'an. Because of its importance, patience is regarded as half of one's religious life (the other half is thankfulness).

The Qur'an orders patience in many verses, such as: Seek help in patience and prayer (2:45) and: Endure, vie with each other in endurance (3:199), and prohibits haste in verses like: Show not haste concerning them (the unbelievers) (46:35) and: When you meet in battle those who do not believe, turn not your backs to them (8:15). In many Qur'anic verses, God praises the patient, declares that He loves them, or mentions the ranks He has bestowed on them: The patient and steadfast, and the truthful and loyal (3:16); God loves the patient (3:145); and Surely God is with the patient (2:153).

The Qur'an mentions many other aspects of patience. For example: If you endure patiently, this is indeed better for those who are patient (16:126) advises patience as a preferable way in dealing with unbelievers while communicating God's Message to them. We will certainly bestow on those who are patient their reward according to the best of what they used to do (16:96) consoles the patient with the best of rewards to be given in the Hereafter. If you have patience and guard yourselves against evil and disobedience, God will send to your aid five thousand angels having distinguishing marks, if they [your enemies] suddenly attack you (3:124) promises the believers Divine aid in return for patience.

How meaningful is the following saying of the master of humanity concerning patience and thankfulness:

How remarkable a believer's affair is, for it is always to his advantage, and such a condition is only for a believer. If something good happens to him he thanks God, which is to his advantage; if something bad happens to him he endures it, which is also to his advantage.

The characteristics of patience can be grouped into five categories: enduring difficulties associated with being a true servant of God or steadfastness in performing regular acts of worship; resisting temptations of the carnal self and Satan to commit sins; enduring heavenly or earthly calamities, which includes resignation to Divine decrees; being steadfast in following the right path and not allowing worldly attractions to cause deviation; and showing no haste in realizing hopes or plans that require a certain length of time to achieve.

With respect to its degrees, patience can be divided into six categories: showing patience for the sake of God; showing patience and attributing it to God (being convinced that God enables one to show patience); enduring patiently whatever comes from God, knowing that He acts from His Wisdom; being resigned to whatever happens in the way of God; showing patience by not disclosing the mysteries of one's achieved spiritual station and to preserve one's nearness to God; and resolving to fulfill one's mission of communicating God's Message to people despite one's deepest desire to die and meet with God.

There are other definitions of patience as well. For example, preserving one's manners in the face of misfortune; being steadfast when confronted with events, and showing no sign of being deterred; never giving in to one's carnal desires and the impulses of one's temperament; accepting the commandments of the Qur'an and the Sunna as a sort of invitation to Paradise; and sacrificing all possessions, including one's soul and beloved ones, for the sake of the True, Beloved One.

Those Qur'anic interpreters who were interested in the text's secret or esoteric meanings have made the following commentaries on the verse: Endure, vie with each other in endurance, and continue your relation with God (3:199):

Be steadfast in performing your religious duties, endure whatever displeasing thing happens to you, and maintain your love of God and desire to meet with Him. Or, be steadfast in fulfilling all your responsibilities for the sake of God and to please Him, and endure the difficulty of always being aware of His constant supervision of you and feeling His omnipresence. Or, be steadfast in following the Straight Path without any deviation, even when Divine bounties pour out onto you. Resolve to endure all difficulties and hardships, and maintain your connection or adherence to God whatever happens to you.

Another approach to patience is to attribute to God Almighty whatever is in the universe and happens therein and, while giving thanks for what appears pleasing, being resigned to what appears displeasing. When a believer unburdens himself or herself to God while trying to overcome a misfortune or hardship, a responsibility that is very hard to fulfill, or sins that might be committed, this must not be considered a complaint against God. Rather, it is a believer's way of asking Him for help and seeking refuge in Him. In no way can such an action be considered a complaint or a protest against God or Divine Destiny. In reality, and according to one's intention, such an act may even be regarded as a supplication and an entreaty, as putting one's trust in Him or as submitting to Him.

The cry of Prophet Job, upon him be peace, to God: Truly distress (disease, tribulation) has seized me. But You are the Most Compassionate of the Compassionate (21:83) and the groaning of Prophet Jacob, upon him be peace: I only complain of my anguish and my sorrow unto God (12:86) are supplications or entreaties for God's pity and compassion. God Almighty praised Job, upon him be peace, for being an excellent servant distinguished with patience and supplications: We found him patient; how excellent a servant! Truly he was ever turning (to God) with supplications (38:44).

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Prophets and saints is their embodiment of patience in all of its manifold forms and degrees, and that without deviating from their utmost devotion to God, they do their best to communicate God's Message to people and bear all misfortune and difficulty arising there from. The glory of humanity, upon him be peace and blessings, who is a mercy for the whole of creation, declared: Among mankind, those who are stricken with the most terrible of misfortunes are the Prophets, and then follow others according to their degree of faith.

Patience is an essential characteristic of those believers who are the most advanced in belief, spirituality, nearness to God, and who guide others to the truth. It is, moreover, the source of power for those advancing toward this final point. Since the most advanced people experience the most misfortune, they are perfect embodiments of patience, which is the price they pay for the rank bestowed on them. Others who have been destined to advance to that final point cross the distances traveled by others through different and frequent acts of worship, by enduring whatever happens to them. Of these, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, says:

If God Almighty has destined a servant of His to a rank or position which he cannot reach through his religious actions, He causes him to suffer from his own self and family, and equips him with patience to endure all his sufferings. He elevates him through patience to the rank to which he has destined him.

Thus the suffering to be endured, the difficulty in fulfilling one's responsibilities, and the pressure of sin contain potential mercy, mercy that is attracted by one's patience. One subjected to such affliction should not unburden himself or herself to anybody else. How beautifully Fuduli says:

You say you are a lover, then do not complain of the affliction of love;

By complaining, do not make others informed of your affliction.

Travelers on the path to God should know how to burn and boil with love or be consumed with affliction, but never complain to others of such love and affliction. Even if crushed by difficulty or responsibility as heavy as mountains, they should not complain to others.

Rumi summarizes such a degree of patience as follows:

In order to be sustenance for man, a source of strength for his knees, a "light" for his eyes, and a substance for the maintenance of his life, a grain of wheat must be buried in the bosom of the earth, germinate under it, and grow to emerge into the air. It must come into the air after a fierce struggle with the earth, and then be sown and threshed, and ground in a mill. After that, it must be kneaded, baked in an oven, and, finally, chewed by teeth, sent into the stomach, and digested.

To attain true humanity, each individual must be "sieved" or "distilled" many times to discover his or her true essence. Otherwise, the ability to develop one's potential to its fullest, to be truly human, is not possible:

It is expected of God's servant to suffer, And of an aloe wood to burn.

Patience is an essential and most important dimension of servanthood to God, and is crowned with resignation, the highest spiritual rank in the sight of God, to whatever God has destined.(6)

 Suhayb ibn Sinan, may Allah be well pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: “How wonderful is the situation of the believer, for all his affairs are good, and such a condition is only for a believer. If something good happens to him he gives thanks, and that is good for him; if something bad happens to him he bears it with patience, and that is also good for him.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Zuhd, 64).

1. In this hadith, the Messenger of Allah draws attention to the favorable situation of the believer, in which all their affairs are good and felicitous and thus invites believers to patience and thankfulness. Life continues with its highs and its lows. Becoming spoilt when one experiences joy and unmeasured grief in the face of sorrow can adversely affect a believer and lead them to great error. The believer is delivered from this hazardous situation through thankfulness for bounties and patience in the face of hardship.

2. Allah the Almighty declares: “*We will certainly test you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and fruits (earnings); but give glad tidings to the persevering and patient*” (al- Baqarah 2:155). It is declared in another verse: Those whose hearts tremble with awe whenever Allah is mentioned, who are always patient with whatever ill befalls them, who always establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and who spend (in Allah’s cause and for the needy) out of whatever we provide for them. (al-Hajj 22:35)

3. Types of Patience: a) Patience in the face of misfortune; b) Patience in avoiding sins; c) Patience in observing regular acts of worship; and d) Patience in relation to time.

##### Patience:

**a) Patience in the face of misfortune:** Misfortune encompasses the various difficulties and hardship that a person can meet throughout their lives, such as illness, death and the like. Strictly speaking, a person must accept the misfortunes befalling them as being from themselves and consider where and how they went wrong that this evil befell them. They must call themselves to account and perpetually keep themselves in check. In other words, if a person seeks to correct their errors, they must act as a prosecutor to their own carnal self and a defense attorney to others. A believer knows that whatever evil befalls them, it is from themselves and whatever good happens to them is from Allah; they are thus patient when misfortune strikes and thankful and humble when they receive goodness. Consequently, the standard of a believer must always be Divine approval and they must do whatever is right and leave the outcome to Allah, in perfect reliance upon him. Allah the Almighty declares:

…It may well be that you dislike a thing but it is good for you, and it may well be that you like a thing but it is bad for you. Allah knows, and you do not know. (al-Baqarah 2:216)

Human beings have no right of complaint in tribulation and illness.

1) Life is cleansed and strengthened, bears fruit and achieves completion with tribulations and illness.

2) This world is an arena of trial and examination and is the site of service. It is not the site of pleasure, merit and reward. One hour of patience during times of illness enables a person to earn the reward of one day’s worship.

**b) Patience in avoiding sins:** A person must respond with the same patience to those things that Allah has prohibited. Patience to be shown upon the first emergence of sin averts the evil to come from it and the person thus staves off its blow. It is for this reason that the Messenger of Allah said to Ali, “O Ali, the first glance is in your favor, but the second is against you.” In other words, one’s gaze can fall upon the forbidden, but if they immediately avert their gaze, this is not recorded as a sin in their name.

**c) Patience in observing regular acts of worship:** Patience is vital in constant and regular worship of Allah. For a person who is only just beginning to observe the Prescribed Prayer, this act of worship can seem quite onerous at the first instance; however, if they are patient and if their spirit becomes one with the Prayer, any Prayer missed thereafter becomes a source of the greatest sorrow for them. The same can be said of such acts of worship as fasting, offering the prescribed annual alms, and the Pilgrimage. Consider the fact that those who undertake an act of worship as arduous as the Pilgrimage wish to return each year. At times, even the quotas placed on the number of people attending disturb them immensely. This love of worship in a sense implies their overcoming their initial exertion. This is the same for virtually all forms of worship.

**d) Patience in relation to time:** This is the type of patience that a person needs to show towards affluence and poverty. One must not question why they are poor while another is wealthy, but must be patient and work. They must not show haste in realizing hopes or plans that require a certain length of time to achieve.(7)

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