**The Second Gleam**

**Illnesses and seeking recovery through the prayer of the Prophet Job**

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate.

*And (mention) Job: He called out to his Lord, saying: “Truly, affliction has visited me (so that I can no longer worship You as I must); and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.”* (21:83)

The prayer of the Prophet Job, upon him be peace, the hero of patience, has proved effective as a means of recovery to many who have recited it during their tribulations. Drawing on the verse, we should say in our prayer: “*Truly, affliction has visited me; and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.”*

What follows is a summary of the well-known experience of the Prophet Job, upon him be peace.

Job was afflicted with numerous wounds and sores over a long period of time, yet he endured his sickness with utmost patience, thinking that a great recompense would be given in return. But later, when he felt he could no longer worship God with his heart and tongue, which are the seat of knowledge and remembrance of God, he feared that his duty of worship would suffer, and so he said in a prayer, not for the sake of his own comfort, but for the sake of his worship of God, “*Affliction has visited me, and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful!”* God Almighty accepted this sincere, disinterested, and devout supplication in the most miraculous fashion. He granted Job perfect good health and made manifest in him an abundance of compassion.

Thus, this Gleam contains five points:

**First point**

Corresponding to the physical wounds and illnesses of the Prophet Job, upon him be peace, we have inner, spiritual diseases. If our inner being was to be turned to the outside, and our outer being turned inward, we would appear with more wounds and diseases than the Prophet Job. For each sin that we commit and each doubt that enters our mind causes wounds in our heart and our spirit.

The wounds of the Prophet Job, upon him be peace, were of such a nature that they threatened his brief, worldly life, but our inner wounds threaten our infinitely longer, everlasting life. We need the supplication of Job thousands of times more than he did. His wounds and diseases affected his heart and tongue, while the wounds that arise from sins, the temptations and the doubts that arise from these wounds, inflict damage upon the inner dimension of the heart, which is the seat of belief, thus,—we seek refuge in God from such a thing—harming our belief. They also prevent the spiritual joy which comes from religious recitations with the tongue, which interprets the belief in the heart, thus causing it to turn away from recitation in aversion.

Sin penetrates to the heart, darkens and hardens it until it extinguishes the light of belief. Each sin has a path that leads to unbelief. Unless that sin is swiftly obliterated by seeking God’s forgiveness, it grows from a worm into a snake that gnaws at the heart.

For example, when a person secretly commits a shameful sin and feels great shame, fearing that others may become aware of this misdeed, they find the existence of angels and spiritual beings too much to endure. They then wish that there were some evidence to deny their existence. Similarly, if one who commits a major sin that deserves the punishment of Hell does not try to shield themselves from the sin by imploring God’s forgiveness, they will then wholeheartedly wish for Hell’s non-existence, and they dare to deny the existence of Hell if they find any encouragement.

Again, people usually feel hurt and distressed when receiving even the slightest of reproaches from their superiors. So, one who shows laziness in fulfilling their duty of servanthood, such as failing to perform the daily obligatory Prayers despite the repeated orders of the Sovereign of Eternity, will feel greatly distressed and wish there were no such duty of servanthood. In turn, there will arise from this wish a desire to deny God, which implies enmity towards Him. If some doubt concerning God’s existence occurs in their heart, they will be inclined to cling to it as conclusive proof. Thus, a wide door to destruction will be opened in front of them. That wretched one does not know that even if the duty of servanthood may cause slight discomfort or bother, by denying God’s existence, they make themselves the target of spiritual troubles that are millions of times more distressing. While agonizing over the bite of a gnat, they welcome the bite of a snake. Many more examples can be coined, but these three are enough to understand the meaning of *But what they themselves have earned has rusted upon their hearts* (83: 14).

**Second point**

As was explained in the Twenty-Sixth Word in *The Words* concerning the meaning of Divine Destiny, people have no right to complain about disasters and illnesses for the following three reasons:

FIRST REASON: God Almighty has made the garment of the body with which He has clothed people a manifestation of His Art. He has made people a model by which to cut, trim, and change the garment of the body, thus displaying the manifestations of His various Names. Just as the Name of the All-Healing manifests Itself by favoring the ill with recovery, so too the Name of the All-Providing is recognized through the satisfaction of hunger. He is the Master of all dominion, and is free to operate however He wills in His dominion.

SECOND REASON: Life is refined, perfected, and strengthened through disasters and illnesses, and fulfils its own purpose. Life led monotonously on the couch of ease and comfort cannot be regarded as existence and does not serve it. Rather, it is almost identical with non-existence.

THIRD REASON: This world is the realm of testing, the abode of service.

It is not the place of pleasure or being rewarded for things that were performed in God’s cause. So, diseases and misfortunes—as long as they do not harm the Religion and are patiently endured—conform fully to service and worship, and even strengthen it. Since such diseases and misfortunes make each hour’s worship equivalent to that of a day, one should offer thanks instead of complaining.

Worship consists of two kinds, positive and negative. What is meant by positive is the worship we perform regularly. As for negative worship, this is when one who is afflicted with misfortune or disease perceives their own weakness and helplessness, turning to and seeking refuge in their Compassionate Lord, concentrating upon Him, and entreating Him, and thus offers a pure form of worship. Hypocrisy cannot penetrate this kind of worship. If one endures patiently, concentrating on the rewards to be given in return for misfortune, and offers thanks, then each hour that passes will count as a whole day spent in worship.

I once was very anxious because of a severe illness that struck one of my brothers of the Hereafter, Muhajir Hafiz Ahmed. But it occurred to my heart that I should congratulate him because each minute he spent was counted as a whole day’s worship. He himself was enduring his illness in patience and thankfulness.

**Third point**

As we have pointed out in one or two of the Words (included in *The Words*), whenever a person thinks of their past life, an utterance of either agony, joy, or relief comes to their tongue. That is, one either regrets or thanks God, saying, “All praise and thanks are for God.”

What causes people to regret is the agony that arises from the termination of former pleasures. The termination of pleasure is a pain in itself. Sometimes a temporary pleasure causes incessant pain, and concentration on it will be like lancing a wound, causing regret to gush forth.

Yet, the continual pleasure felt in the spirit that arises from the cessation of past temporary pains leads one to utter, “All praise and thanks are for God.” In addition to this innate tendency of humanity, if one considers the reward to be given in the Hereafter in return for misfortune and thinks that a brief life will count as a long life spent in reward and that it will bring good, then instead of showing just patience, one will be thankful. So one should say, “All praise and thanks are for God for every state, save unbelief and misguidance.”

People say, “Hard times seem interminable.” Indeed, they do, but not because such times are distressing, as people usually imagine, but rather because they yield important results, the same as a long life does.

**Fourth point**

As was explained in the First Station of the Twenty-First Word, if a person does not waste the power of patience God Almighty has given to them on baseless fears and worries, this patience will suffice for every misfortune. But if one wastes the power of patience on the misfortunes that are past or on imagined ones of the future, instead of concentrating on the present misfortune—a state that is caused by being under the influence of groundless apprehensions and anxieties—as one is unaware of the nature of things and events and perceives this transient life as if it were eternal, then one’s patience will not be able to cope with the misfortunes of the present. As a result, people begin to complain. People complain in a manner as if—God forbid!—they were complaining about God Almighty to others. In a most unjustified and even insane manner, they complain and display impatience.

If the day that is past held misfortune, the distress is now gone, and only tranquility remains; the pain has vanished and the pleasure in its cessation remains; the trouble is gone, and the reward remains. Hence one should not complain, but give thanks in joy. One should not resent misfortune but love it. Any part of the transient life that has passed in misfortune comes to be counted as an eternal, blessed life owing to the misfortune. So worrying about the repetition of pains suffered in the past and wasting part of one’s patience on such worries is lunacy.

As for the future, since they have not yet arrived, thinking of diseases or misfortune that will probably come and showing impatience by complaining and feeling stressed or wearied is also foolishness. This is as ridiculous as complaining now about future hunger or thirst, as thinking about them now, and eating and drinking all day to avoid such possible afflictions. This self-oppression is so ridiculous that one who is afflicted with it no longer deserves pity and compassion.

In short, just as thankfulness increases Divine bounty, so too complaints increase misfortune, leaving no justified reason for compassion.

During the initial year of World War I, a virtuous person in Erzurum was afflicted with a bad disease. I went to visit him, and he said to me, com- plaining bitterly, “For a hundred nights I have not been able to place my head on the pillow and sleep.” I felt great sorrow and pity for him. Suddenly a thought came to me and I said:

Brother, your past hundred troublesome days are now just like one hundred happy days. So do not think of them and complain; rather consider them in their true nature and be thankful. As for future days, since they have not yet come, seek refuge in the Mercy of your All-Merciful, All-Compassionate Lord. Do not weep without being beaten, do not be afraid of something that is non-existent, and do not give something non-existent the color of existence. Concentrate on the present hour; your power of patience will suffice for this hour.

Do not act like a foolish commander who, although the left wing of the enemy force has joined his right wing and reinforced him, disperses his forces in the center to the left and the right even before the right wing of the enemy is ready to fight. Thus, he weakens his own center, and the enemy destroys it with minimal effort.

I added:

Brother, do not be like that foolish commander! Mobilize all your forces against the present hour. Think of Divine mercy and the other worldly rewards; consider how you can transform your brief, transient life into a long, everlasting one. So, instead of complaining bitterly, give joyful thanks.

Much relieved, he said, “All praise and thanks be to God, my disease is now a tenth of what it was before.”

**Fifth point**

This point consists of three matters.

FIRST MATTER: Genuine and harmful misfortune is that which affects the Religion and one’s religious life. One should always seek refuge in tears at the Divine Court from misfortune in matters of Religion, and cry out for help. However, any misfortune that does not affect the Religion or one’s religious life is not misfortune from the perspective of truth. Some such misfortunes are merciful warnings from the All-Merciful One. Consider the shepherd who throws a stone at his sheep when they trespass on another’s field; the sheep, feeling that the stone is intended as a warning to save them from a harmful action, turn back gladly. Similarly, there are many apparent misfortunes that are in reality Divine warnings and admonitions; some others serve for atonement for and forgiveness of sins, while yet others arise from heedlessness of religious duties, and remind us of our human helplessness and weakness, thus giving us some sort of peace and serenity.

Diseases regarded as misfortune are, as has already been mentioned, not misfortune, but rather a favor from God and a means of purification. There is a Prophetic Tradition which says, “Just as a tree drops its ripe fruit when shaken, so too do sins fall away through the shivering of a fever.” (Al-Bukhari, *al-Jami‘ as-Sahih*, “Marda” 2; Ibn Maja, *Sunan*, “Tibb” 18)

The Prophet Job, upon him be peace, did not pray for the comfort of his soul, but rather sought a cure for the purpose of worship when his disease began to prevent his remembrances of God with his tongue and his reflection upon the truths of belief and similar topics in his heart. We too should make our primary intent, when making that supplication, the healing of our inward and spiritual wounds that arise from sinning.

If physical diseases hinder our worship, we may seek refuge at the Divine Court from them. However, we should seek refuge in a humble and supplicating fashion, not in a protesting and complaining manner. Since we are pleased with God as our Lord, then we must resign ourselves to all that He gives us as a manifestation of His Lordship.

To sigh and complain in a manner that suggests we object to Divine Destiny and Decree is a form of criticizing Divine Destiny, an accusation leveled against God’s compassion. One who criticizes Divine Destiny is hitting their head against an anvil and breaking it. One who finds fault with God’s mercy will inevitably be deprived of it. Using a broken hand to take revenge will only induce further damage to the hand. Similarly, a person who when afflicted with misfortune responds to it with protest and complaint, only compounds their misfortune.

SECOND MATTER: Physical misfortunes grow when they are seen to be large, and shrink when they are seen to be small. For example, we think we see something at night. If we concentrate on it as if it were a real thing, it grows bigger, but if we do not, it disappears. As another example, if we attempt to ward off an attacking swarm of bees, they will become more aggressive, but if we go on without paying them any attention, they will disperse. In the same way, physical misfortunes, when perceived as great and given attention, grow, and worry causes them to penetrate the body and take root in the heart. This will additionally give rise to inward affliction, which in turn causes the outward, physical misfortune to perpetuate itself.

However, if the worry is removed through resignation to the Divine Decree and reliance on God, the physical misfortune will gradually decrease, dry up and disappear, just like a tree whose roots have been severed. I once said the following to describe this reality:

O helpless one, give up lamenting over misfortune and trust in God, For know that this lamenting is an error that causes trouble after trouble;

If you have found the One Who makes you suffer, then know that misfortune is a gift that brings peace and happiness.

But if you do not find Him, know that the whole world is A place of suffering and misfortune doomed to destruction.

So, when you have such a great responsibility (as to be able to make this transient world the field of the Hereafter), Why do you lament over an insignificant misfortune?

Come, put your trust in God and smile at the face of misfortune So that it may also smile, for as it smiles, it lessens and changes.

If, when fighting, one smiles at the enemy, enmity, however bitter it may be, will lessen and change into reconciliation, and will even disappear. Just so, if one confronts misfortune with reliance on God, the result will be the same.

THIRD MATTER: Each age has characteristics particular to itself. In this age of heedlessness of Divine orders misfortune has changed its nature. It is not misfortune, but rather a Divine favor for certain persons at certain times.

I especially regard those afflicted with illness at this time as fortunate— provided their illness does not affect their faith or religious life—and therefore I cannot oppose illness or certain other kinds of misfortune. Nor can I feel pity for them. Whenever a sick young man comes to visit me, I see him, in comparison to his peers, as being more concerned with and devoted to his religious duties and the Hereafter. This gives me the idea that illness is not a misfortune for such people, but rather a Divine favor. For, although illness causes some trouble for such a person in their brief, transient worldly life, in reality it is beneficial for their eternal life. It counts as a form of worship. If this person recovers, they will not be able to maintain the spiritual state they had during their illness and might fall into dissipation because of the intoxicating lures of youth and dissoluteness of the present time.

**Conclusion**

In order to display His infinite Power and limitless Mercy, God Almighty has created humankind with unlimited innate impotence or helplessness as well as poverty or want. He has also created it to be like a machine that has the capacity to receive unlimited varieties of pain as well as innumerable varieties of pleasure to exhibit the countless examples of His Names. Within that human machine are hundreds of instruments, each of which has its own particular pains and pleasures, duties and rewards. It can be said that all the Divine Names manifested in the universe, which is like an example of the human on a macro scale, also have manifestations in the human, which is the micro-cosmos.

Whatever is beneficial to human beings, such as good health, appetites, and pleasures, leads the human to offer thanks, prompts the machine to carry out its functions in many respects, and thus the human becomes a factory that produces thanks. Likewise, afflictions such as illness, pain, and other things that provoke suffering and trouble set in motion other mechanisms in that machine, working the mines of helplessness, weakness, and poverty that are inherent in human nature. They put human beings in a state where they are ready to seek help and refuge, but not only with a single tongue but with the tongue of all its members. Thus the human becomes like a moving pen that consists of thousands of different pens due to those afflictions. Humans inscribe their life history on the page of their life or on a tablet that belongs to the World of Immaterial Representations or Ideal Forms; they make it a board where the manifestations of the Divine Names can be read and the human becomes like an ode composed by the All-Glorified Being, thus fulfilling the duty required by his or her creation. (From Risalei Nur Collection)