DEALING WITH GRIEF IN ISLAM (PART 1 OF 5)

Rating: **4.5**

Description: Why do bad things happen according to the Quran?

Category: Articles Worship and Practice Islamic Morals and Practices

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War. Famine. Suffering. Not a day goes by that the evening news does not report horrific stories of humanity in despair, and of worldwide misery. On a more personal level, many of us have been stricken with grief and depression in our day to day lives. A loved one passes away. A financial downturn. A cheating spouse. Why then does God allow bad things to happen to good people? This is a question that people of many religious faiths have struggled with for hundreds of years. It is one of the greatest stumbling blocks to faith and has led countless people to disbelieve in God altogether.

Theists have tried to reconcile God and evil in a number of ways. Some pagans claimed that God hates evil, but He is powerless to prevent it. This idea, however, is rejected in the Quran, because it questions God's status as The Almighty (*Al-Azeez*), The All-Powerful (*Al-Jabbaar*), The All-Strong (*Al-Qawiyy*), and The All Capable (*Al-Qadeeir*). Others have claimed that perhaps God is capable of removing evil, but He does not know when or where evil will happen. This idea relegates God to a fireman who only comes to the scene of a fire after half the building has burned down. Yet, this too is an unacceptable claim, for God's Names in the Quran include The All-Knowing (*Al-Aalim*), The All-Seeing (*Al-Baseer*), The All-Hearing (*Al-Samee'*), and The Constant Owner and Controller of Everything (*Al-Maleek*). In fact, it would be considered blasphemous to question God's Power: if God wanted to remove all evil on this earth, then nothing could prevent Him from that.

Polytheistic religions further another hypothesis: God is good, but there are other evil gods who frustrate His goodness and spread corruption on this earth. God is therefore locked in a struggle with these other deities. Perhaps Satan is a counter-god with whom God must constantly battle with. Yet this idea—of multiple gods—is categorically rejected in the Quran, which calls God as The One (*Al-Wahid*), The One and Only (*Al-Ahad*), The First (*Al-Awwal*), and The Last (*Al-Akhir*). The Quran stresses that there are no gods besides God; for example, the Quran says:

"Your God is but one God; there is no god other than Him!" (Quran 2:163)

With over a thousand verses to this effect, it would be impossible to believe in multiple deities; rather, there is one and only one supreme God.

The ancient Gnostics had such a troubling time reconciling the evil of this world with God that they concluded that God Himself must be evil. People who further this claim argue that God cannot possibly be All-Powerful and All-Loving at the same time. If God is capable of removing evil and does not do it, He must therefore be evil. Yet, this idea is unconditionally rejected in the Quran, which declares that God is The Most Loving (*Al-Wadood*), The Most Kind (*Al-Barr*), and The Most Generous (*Al-Kareem*). The Quran also refers to God as The Most Merciful (*Al-Raheem*), The Most Beneficent (*Al-Rahmaan*), The Most Forgiving (*Al-Ghaffaar*), The Lord of Infinite Grace (*Dhul Fadl al-Adtheem*), and the Ultimate Source of Peace and Safety (*Al-Salaam*).

Therefore, the Quran affirms that God is both All-Powerful and Most Loving; so how can these two qualities be reconciled, given the fact that the world is full of evil? The Islamic perspective is that God causes "bad" things to happen in order to achieve a greater good. God afflicts His servants with suffering in order to mold them into the type of people He wants them to be. Through suffering, humans can develop qualities that last forever: steadfastness and patience in the face of great adversity, as well as great humility and meekness. Most importantly, suffering causes people to turn towards God for help; it establishes and differentiates the true believers from the false ones.

Suffering Causes People to Remember God

Human beings tend to forget God when they are prosperous and only remember Him when afflicted with suffering. The Quran gives the example of a ship: when the ship is smooth sailing, then the occupants do not remember God, but when the wind threatens to capsize the ship, suddenly the occupants of the ship begin praying sincerely to God. The Quran says:

> ***"Your Lord is He that makes the ship go smoothly through the sea for you that you may seek of His Grace, for He is Most Merciful to you. When distress seizes you at sea, you cry to nobody save Him (God), but when He brings you back safely to the land, you turn away (from Him). Most ungrateful is man!" (Quran 17:66-67)***

This example can be applied to our day-to-day lives. A person may forget God when his financial situation is good, but if he were laid off from work, then suddenly he'd be invoking God for help. When Prophet Muhammad declared God's Message, it was the poor and the slaves who made up the bulk of his followers. The rich and prosperous leaders of Mecca, on the other hand, continued to live a life removed from God. It is well-known that rich people—such as actors, singers, and other celebrities—live the most ungodly of lives. Meanwhile, the meek and needy cling to God more. This means that suffering is not necessarily a bad thing, and prosperity is not necessarily a good thing. God says in the Quran:

"But it may happen that you dislike a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you. And God knows and you do not know!" (Quran 2:216)

This is all a part of human psychology: we forget God in good times, and we remember Him during times of distress. So God afflicts us with trials and tribulations so that we may turn to Him and seek His Grace. How many countless people have turned to God and were guided to Islam after having been afflicted with suffering upon suffering? An example that comes to mind is of a well-meaning politician who intends to do good, but once he comes to power, the system corrupts him. Soon, he starts giving and taking bribes; he begins to live the ungodly life of a rich politician, wasteful and extravagant. Then suddenly, God causes him to be arrested; the man loses all of his wealth, his wife leaves him, and he rots away in jail. Finally, after having pondered over his gains and losses, the man turns to God. So bad things happened to this man in order that a greater good could occur. When he was prosperous, he was heading towards Hell, but when God afflicted him with distress, the man changed his course; the temporary suffering of jail is indeed a small price to pay for the Eternal Bliss in Paradise. In conclusion, we see that God causes bad things to happen to good people, in order that a greater good come to them in the long run.

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