DEALING WITH GRIEF IN ISLAM (PART 4 OF 5)

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Description: The tested one is in the company of the righteous.

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When calamity strikes us, we should take pride in the fact that we are similar to the righteous servants of God, of whom were the Prophets; all of them were put through trials and tests. Prophet Abraham and his son, peace be upon them, were both tested in a most severe way. God commanded Prophet Abraham to sacrifice his son, Ismail. This command no doubt would have been very difficult for Prophet Abraham, and he no doubt would have been very saddened by the thought of losing his loved one. But Prophet Abraham patiently persevered and obeyed God. Not only this, but even Ismail, remained steadfast and obedient and offered himself to be sacrificed.

This test that God put Prophet Abraham through was to test his determination. If Prophet Abraham or his son had been weak in faith, they would have both failed this severe test God rewarded them with a great reward on account of their strong faith and obedience to Him; right before Prophet Abraham struck his son, a ram appeared and God told him to sacrifice it instead. As a reward, God promised to establish them as leaders on earth. God says of Prophet Abraham and his son:

"So when they had both submitted their wills (to God), and he (Abraham) had laid him (his son) down on his forehead (for sacrifice), We called out unto him, saying: "O Abraham! You have indeed fulfilled the vision." Thus, indeed do we reward the doers of good. Most surely, this was a clear test." (Quran 37:103-106)

The Quran says:

"And remember that Abraham was tested by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled. He (God) said: 'I will make you a leader to the nations.'" (Quran 2:124)

No doubt when Prophet Abraham was instructed to sacrifice his son, he might have been reluctant in that regard, but he did it out of obedience to God Almighty. This goes to say that even if one may dislike something there may be good in it. God says:

"And it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. God knows and you do not know." (Quran 2:216)

Another example that comes to mind is that of Prophet Joseph, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him. The Quran mentions many details of the trials and tribulations he faced in his life. His father loved him a great deal, which made his brothers very jealous of him. They conspired against him, and finally dumped him in a deep well. A company of travelers passed by the well, and one of them let down his bucket. He said, "Good news! Here is a boy." And they took him as merchandise. With this, Prophet Joseph was sent to the far off land of Egypt as a slave. An Egyptian governor bought him, and Prophet Joseph dutifully toiled away. As he was in the service of the governor, the test intensified, the governor's wife, who was very beautiful, tried to seduce Joseph. This was a great trial for Prophet Joseph, and he resisted her advances with steadfast perseverance. One day, the governor's wife ran after Prophet Joseph, so to seduce him by force, and she tore his shirt, whereupon her husband entered the room. She accused Prophet Joseph of rape but Joseph denied it, and when the governor saw his shirt torn from the back, he asked his wife to repent to God Almighty. She schemed and came up with a plot to have Prophet Joseph; she gave him one of two choices, to either approach her or to be thrown in prison. He chose the second and was put in prison for a period of time.

When we are struck with calamities, we should think of all the trials Prophet Joseph went through: years of slavery and imprisonment. Yet, through it all, Prophet Joseph remained steadfast to God. He never resented the calamities that had befallen him, but instead used the time to invoke his Lord. It was then—finally, after many years—that God rewarded Prophet Joseph for his steadfastness. It was in that same jail cell that he met a man who had a dream; God gave Prophet Joseph the gift of being able to interpret dreams. And so Prophet Joseph interpreted his cellmate's dream, telling him that he (the cellmate) would go free and work for the king. Indeed, the prophecy came true and the man did go free to work for the king.

One day, the king had a dream. The story is narrated in the Quran:

"And the king of Egypt said: 'Verily, I saw in a dream seven fat cows, whom seven lean cows were devouring, and seven green ears of corn and seven others dry. O notables! Explain to me my dream if it be that you can interpret dreams.'" (Quran 12:43)

Prophet Joseph's ex-cellmate, who was now in the service of the Egyptian king, immediately remembered Joseph. He informed the king about Prophet Joseph, and so Joseph was asked to interpret the dream, which he did. Prophet Joseph told the king that there would be seven years of good harvest, after which would follow seven years of drought and famine. He advised the king to store up food during the seven years of prosperity, which could be used during the times of drought and famine.

The king was so pleased by Prophet Joseph that he not only set him free but appointed him to a very high position in the government. And so God established a great deal of good through adversity; had Prophet Joseph never been abandoned in the well by his brothers, nor sold into slavery, nor imprisoned wrongfully, he would never have been found by the king and appointed to a position of such great authority. Indeed, Prophet Joseph had to go through all that tribulation in order to attain that rank. Therefore, when we go through difficult times in life, we should be positive. It may be that God is propelling us to a greater good which may be unknown to us at that moment.

Prophet Solomon was also tested, although in a different way. He was given immense wealth and power; history attests to the fact that wealth and power corrupts. Yet, Prophet Solomon was one of the few kings who remained pious and God-fearing. The Quran says:

"And certainly we tested Solomon…and he (Solomon) turned (to God)." (Quran 38:34)

Indeed, *all* of God's prophets were tested; this shows that God bestows trials upon His righteous servants, and we should feel proud to be in their company. We should also emulate their behavior, which was to remain steadfast in times of tribulation.

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