

HOW ISLAM DEALS WITH SADNESS AND WORRY (PART 2 OF 4): PATIENCE

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Sadness and worry are part of the human condition. Life is a series of moments. At the two extremes are joyful moments that make our hearts sing with gladness and dark moments that plunge us into sadness and worry. In between is real life; the highs, the lows, the mundane and boring, the sweetness, and light. It is in these times that the believer must try to establish a connection to God.



The believer must forge a bond that is unbreakable. When the joy of life fills our hearts and minds we must not forget that it is a blessing from God and equally when we are faced with sadness and worry we must realize that this too is from God, even though at first glance we may not see the blessing.

God is the Most Wise and the Most Just. Whatever condition we find ourselves in, and no matter what we are forced to confront, it is imperative that we open our eyes to the fact that God knows what is good for us. Though we shy away from facing our fears and worries, it may be that we hate a thing that is good for us and desire something that can only lead to ruin and damnation.

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

The life of this world was designed by our Creator to maximize our chances of living a blissful life in the Hereafter. When we face trials, they help us grow and mature into human beings who are able to function effortlessly in this transient world.

God has not abandoned us in face of the temptations and trials we face in this world, He has equipped us with potent weapons. Three of the most important are patience, gratefulness, and trust. The great Islamic scholar of the 14th century CE, Ibnul Qayyim said that our happiness in this life and our salvation in the Hereafter depend on

patience.

“Verily! I have rewarded them this Day for their patience; they are indeed the ones that are successful.” (Quran 23:111)

“...to be firm or patient in pain or suffering, and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God fearing.” (Quran 2:177)

The Arabic word for patience is *sabr* and it comes from a root word meaning to stop, detain, or refrain. Ibnul Qayyim explained^[1] that having patience meant having the ability to stop ourselves from despairing, to refrain from complaining, and to control ourselves in times of sadness and worry. Prophet Muhammad’s son in law Ali ibn Abu Talib defined patience as “seeking God’s help”^[2]

Whenever we are beset by sadness and worry our first reaction should always be turning to God. By recognizing His Greatness and Omnipotence, we begin to understand that God alone can ease our troubled souls. God Himself advised us to call on Him.

“And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them, and leave the company of those who belie or deny (or utter impious speech against) His Names.” (Quran 7:180)

Prophet Muhammad encouraged us to call on God by all of His most beautiful names. In his own supplications, he is known to have said, **“Oh God, I ask you by every name that You have named yourself, or that You have revealed in Your book, or that You have taught any of Your creation, or that You have kept hidden in the unseen knowledge with Yourself.”**^[3]

In times of sorrow and stress, contemplating the names of God can bring great relief. It can also help us focus on being calm and patient. It is important to understand that although the believer is encouraged not to thrash about in grief and anguish or to complain about the stresses and problems, he is allowed to turn to God and supplicate to Him and to ask Him for relief.

Human beings are frail. Our tears fall, our hearts break and the pain is sometimes almost unbearable. Even the prophets, whose connection to God was unbreakable, felt their hearts constrict in fear or pain. They too turned their faces to God and begged for relief. However, their complaints were surrounded with pure patience and pure acceptance of whatever fate God had decreed.

When Prophet Jacob despaired of ever seeing his sons Joseph or Benjamin he turned to God, and the Quran tells us that he beseeched God for relief. Prophet Jacob knew that there was no point in raging against the world, he knew that God loves and protects those who are patient.

“He said: ‘I only complain of my grief and sorrow to God, and I know from God that which you know not.’” (Quran 12:86)

Quran also tells us that Prophet Job turned to God begging of His mercy. He was impoverished, stricken with disease, and he lost his family, friends, and livelihood yet he bore all this with patience and forbearance and he turned to God.

“And (remember) Job, when he cried to his Lord, ‘Verily, distress has seized me, and You are the Most Merciful of all those who show mercy.’ So We answered his call, and We removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his family to him (that he had lost), and the like thereof along with them, as a mercy from Ourselves and a Reminder for all who worship Us (God).” (Quran 21: 83-84)

Patience means accepting what is beyond our control. In times of stress and anxiety, being able to surrender to the will of God is a relief beyond measure. This does not mean that we sit back and let life pass by. No! It means that we strive to please God in all aspects of our life, in our work and play, in our family life and in our personal endeavors.

However, when things don't go the way we planned or the way we wanted, even when it seems that fears and worries are pushing us under, we accept what God has decreed and continue to strive to please Him. Being patient is hard work; it does not always come naturally or easily. Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said, **“Whoever tries to be patient then God will help him to be patient”**.

[4]

It becomes easy for us to exercise patience when we realize that it is impossible to count all the blessings God has bestowed upon us. The air we breathe, the sunshine on our faces, the wind through our hair, the rain on the parched earth and the glorious Quran, God's words to us are all among the innumerable blessings of God upon us. Remembering God and contemplating His greatness is the key to patience, and patience is a key to Paradise everlasting, God's greatest blessing for the fragile creatures called humankind.

Footnotes:

[1] Ibn Qayyim al jawziyyah, 1997, *Patience and gratitude*, English translation, United Kingdom, Ta Ha Publishers.

[2] Ibid. P12

[3] Ahmad, classified Saheeh by Al Baniv.

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