

Being Patient When Tested by Allāh | Abū Ishāq Nadīm



Indeed, Islām is a complete and perfect religion which addresses all aspects and situations that a person faces in this worldly life. From amongst such situations is the issue of mental well-being, physical well-being, and a person's state at the time of being tested by Allāh; indeed, every test that a person is afflicted with is from Allāh.

Patience is from the highest forms of worship, and Allāh has informed us that He has created us in order to test which of us are best in deeds. He said:

﴿ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ﴾

“Who has created death and life, that He may test you which of you is best in deed.”¹

When a person is afflicted with any type of calamity, whether it be physical loss, internal stress or distress; then what is obligatory upon the one who has submitted himself to the will of Allāh? What is the obligation upon the Muslim, who has submitted themselves to Allāh completely? What is obligated upon the believer with regards to his reactions towards these tests, and towards these trials and these calamities?

¹ Sūrah al-Mulk 67: 2

Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمه الله a well-known scholar and imām and the student of Shaykh al-Islām ibn Taymiyyah (died in the year 751H) said:

Calamities that befall the slave of Allāh are irreversible; whether it be the death of a close one or wealth that has been stolen, or illness that befalls a person. These are things that a person cannot repeal once they have occurred. The slave of Allāh falls between four different categories as it relates to these calamities.

The first of them: the lowest of them is the level where a person feels helpless, hopeless, angry, and in a state of rejection and complaint.

Ibn al-Qayyim said regarding this person: None behaves like this except the one who has the lowest level of intellect, the lowest level of religion, and the lowest level of public manners.

The second level: the level of al-ṣabr; observing patience. Whether the practice of this patience was for the sake of Allāh or whether it was in order to protect his or her face in public.

The third level: the level which relates to being pleased with the situation he or she has been afflicted with; this is higher than the level of being patient.

The fourth and the highest level: the level of al-shukr (giving thanks). This is higher than the level of being pleased with the decree of Allāh. A person watches the trial and test, sees that test coming, and they recognize it as a blessing. So, they thank the One who afflicted them with that particular test.

Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uthaymīn, رحمه الله discusses these four levels in his explanation of Riyāḍh al-Ṣāliḥīn:

He mentioned that the first of them is that a person is angered. The second is that a person is patient. The third is that he is pleased and the fourth is that he is thankful. Regarding the first level: As for the one who is in a state of anger, then this could either be with the heart, or demonstrated upon the tongue, or upon the limbs (regarding a person’s actions). So as for the anger which occurs as a result of this displeasure and discontentment in a person’s heart, this is a type of blame that a person carries against their Lord. Indeed, it reflects a person’s belief that Allāh has in some way oppressed them or wronged them due to this affliction. As for showing this displeasure with the tongue, it is to openly call out words of displeasure, and distasteful words and cursing time.

As for expressing this type of displeasure and anger with the limbs, it is to fall into acts like striking of the cheeks, slapping the head, pulling out hair, tearing clothes, tearing the shirts and behaviour like this. All of this shows this type of displeasure. The second level: patience; this is when a person controls himself despite hating the calamity and wishing that it never actually happened. Despite this, the person observes patience. They do not say that which angers Allāh and they do not feel any displeasure or anger towards Allāh. The third level: being pleased with the test. This person's heart is at ease towards the calamity that befell them. They are at complete ease as if no affliction had befallen them in the first place. The fourth level: the level of al-shukr, this is as the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) would do in times of hardship and difficulty.

As occurs in the ḥadīth that when the Messenger of Allāh would see something that he disliked he would say, 'alḥamdu Lillāh 'alá kulli ḥāl (Praise be to Allāh in all circumstances).'²

'Ā' aisha narrated that when something pleased the Prophet (ﷺ), he would say: 'alḥamdu Lillāh lathī bi ni'matihi tatimmus ṣaliḥāt' and when he saw something that displeased him, he would say: 'alḥamdu Lillāh 'alá kulli ḥāl.'³

It is therefore a must O sister in Islām to observe patience in times of calamity, as the scholars have advised us. May Allāh make us from those who are patient when tested.

² Sunan Ibn Mājah, authenticated by Shaykh al-Albānī

³ Sunan Ibn Majah, classified as Ṣaḥīḥ according to Shaykh Al-Albānī in Silsilat al-Ṣaḥīḥah ḥadīth 265)