

PATIENCE (SABIR)

QURAN (THE QUR'AN With Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ

Endure patiently; your endurance is only for God's sake and by His help; and do not grieve for them (because of their attitude toward your mission), nor be distressed because of what they scheme. (Surah An-Nahl, 127)¹

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدْوَةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا

And keep yourself patient, along with those who invoke their Lord morning and evening, seeking His "Face" (His eternal, good pleasure, and the meeting with Him in the Hereafter); and do not let your eyes pass beyond them, desiring the beauties of the life of this world (by the participation of those of leading positions among people in your assemblies). And pay no heed to (the desires of) him whose heart We have made unmindful of Our remembrance, who follows his lusts and fancies, and whose affair exceeds all bounds (of right and decency). (Surah Al-Kahf, 28)²

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَأَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةٌ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

Say (quoting Me): "O My servants who believe: keep from disobedience to your Lord, in reverence for Him and piety. For those devoted to doing good in this world, aware that God is seeing them, there is good (by way of recompense). And God's earth is vast (enabling worship). Those who are patient (persevering in adversity, worshipping God, and refraining from sins) will surely be given their reward without measure." (Surah az – Zumar, 10)³

¹ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=16&min=120&show=10

² http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=18&min=20&show=10

³ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=39

قَوْلًا لَّنَبَلُّوَنَكُم بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصِ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ
وَبَشِيرِ الصَّابِرِينَ
وَإِسْعَةً إِنَّمَا يُؤَفِّي الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

We will certainly test you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and fruits (earnings); but give glad tidings to the persevering and patient:(Surah Al-Baqarah, 155)⁴

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Those who, when a disaster befalls them, say, "Surely we belong to God (as His creatures and servants), and surely to Him we are bound to return." (And they act accordingly.)(Surah Al Baqarah, 156)⁵

جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ
اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ
يُنْفِقُونَ

Those whose hearts tremble with awe whenever God is mentioned, who are always patient with whatever ill befalls them, who always establish the Prayer in conformity with its conditions, and who spend (in God's cause and for the needy) out of whatever We provide for them. (Surah Al-Hajj, 35)⁶

HADITH

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "The example of a believer is that of a fresh tender plant; from whatever direction the wind comes, it bends it, but when the wind becomes quiet, it becomes straight again. Similarly, a believer is afflicted with calamities (but he remains patient till Allah removes his difficulties.) And an impious wicked person is like a pine tree which keeps hard and straight till Allah cuts (breaks) it down when He wishes." (See Hadith No. 558, Vol. 9.)⁷

Narrated `Abdullah:

I visited Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) while he was suffering from a high fever. I said, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! You have a high fever." He said, "Yes, I have as much fever as two men of you." I said, "Is it because you will have a double reward?" He said, "Yes, it is so. No Muslim is afflicted with any harm,

⁴ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=2&min=150&show=10

⁵ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=2&min=150&show=10

⁶ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=22&min=30&show=10

⁷ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/75/4>

even if it were the prick of a thorn, but that Allah expiates his sins because of that, as a tree sheds its leaves."⁸

Narrated 'Aisha (the wife of the Prophet):

Allah's Apostle said, "No calamity befalls a Muslim but that Allah expiates some of his sins because of it, even though it were the prick he receives from a thorn."⁹

Narrated Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri and Abu Huraira:

The Prophet said, "No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that."¹⁰

COMMENTARIES

From the Risale-I Nur Collection by Beduizzam Said Nursi – a thematic tafseer

The Flashes, The Second Flash

Second Point

As was explained concerning the meaning of divine determining, known as destiny, in the Twenty Sixth Word, men have no right to complain in the case of disasters and illness for the following three reasons:

First Reason: God Most High has made the garment of the body with which He has clothed man a manifestation of His art. He has made man to be a model on which He cuts, trims, alters and changes the garment of the body, thus displaying the manifestation of various of His names. Just as the name of Healer makes it necessary that illness should exist, so to the name of Provider requires that hunger should exist. And so on.

The Lord of All Dominion has disposal over His dominion as He wishes.

Second Reason: It is by means of disasters and sicknesses that life is refined, perfected, strengthened and advanced; that it yields results, attains perfection and fulfils its own purpose. Life led monotonously on the couch of ease and comfort resembles not so much the pure good that is being, as the pure evil that is nonbeing; it tends in fact in that direction.

⁸ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/75/8>

⁹ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/75/1>

¹⁰ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/75/2>

Third Reason: This worldly realm is the field of testing, the abode of service. It is not the place of pleasure, reward, and requital. Considering, then, that it is the abode of service and place of worship, sicknesses and misfortunes as long as they do not affect belief and are patiently endured – conform fully to service and worship, and even strengthen it. Since they make each hour’s worship equivalent to that of a day, one should offer thanks instead of complaining.

Worship consists in fact of two kinds, positive and negative. What is meant by the positive is obvious. As for negative worship, this is when one afflicted with misfortune or sickness perceives his own weakness and helplessness, and turning to his Compassionate Lord, seeks refuge in Him, meditates upon Him, petitions Him, and thus offers a pure form of worship that no hypocrisy can penetrate. If he endures patiently, thinks of the reward attendant on misfortune and offers thanks, then each hour that he passes will count as a whole day spent in worship. His brief life becomes very long. There are even cases where a single minute is counted as equal to a whole day’s worship.

I once was extremely anxious because of an awesome illness that struck one of my brothers of the hereafter, Muhajir Hafiz Ahmed. But then a warning came to my heart: “Congratulate him!” Each minute he spends is counted as a whole day’s worship. He was in any even ten during his illness in patience and gratitude.

Third Point

As we have pointed out in one or two of the Words, whenever one thinks of his past life, he will say in his heart or with his tongue either “Ah!” or “Oh!” That is he will either experience regret, or say “Thanks and praise be to God!” Regret is inspired by the pains arising from the cessation of former pleasures and separation from them. For the cessation of pleasure is a pain in itself. Sometimes a momentary pleasure will cause everlasting pain. To think upon it will be like lancing a wound, causing regret to gush forth.

As for the lasting spiritual pleasure that comes from the cessation of momentary pains experienced in the past, it inspires man to exclaim, “Thanks and praise be to God!” In addition to this innate tendency of man, if he thinks of the reward that results from misfortune and there quital that awaits him in the hereafter, if he realizes that his brief life will count as a long life because of misfortune, then instead of be in merely patient he should be thankful. He should say,

“Praise be to God for every state other than unbelief and misguidance.”

It is commonly said that misfortune is longlasting. Indeed it is, but not because it is troublesome and distressing as people customarily imagine, but rather because it yields vital results; just like a long life.¹¹

FethullahGulen - Sufism 1 – a thematic tafseer

Sabr - Patience

Sabr literally means enduring, bearing, and resisting pain; suffering and difficulty; and dealing calmly with problems. In more general terms it means patience, which is one of the most important actions of

¹¹ <http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.203.23>

the heart mentioned in the Qur'an. Because of its importance, patience is regarded as half of one's religious life (the other half is thankfulness).

The Qur'an orders patience in many verses, such as: Seek help in patience and prayer (2:45) and: Endure, vie with each other in endurance (3:199), and prohibits haste in verses like: Show not haste concerning them (the unbelievers) (46:35) and: When you meet in battle those who do not believe, turn not your backs to them (8:15). In many Qur'anic verses, God praises the patient, declares that He loves them, or mentions the ranks He has bestowed on them: The patient and steadfast, and the truthful and loyal (3:16); God loves the patient (3:145); and Surely God is with the patient (2:153).

The Qur'an mentions many other aspects of patience. For example: If you endure patiently, this is indeed better for those who are patient (16:126) advises patience as a preferable way in dealing with unbelievers while communicating God's Message to them. We will certainly bestow on those who are patient their reward according to the best of what they used to do (16:96) consoles the patient with the best of rewards to be given in the Hereafter. If you have patience and guard yourselves against evil and disobedience, God will send to your aid five thousand angels having distinguishing marks, if they [your enemies] suddenly attack you (3:124) promises the believers Divine aid in return for patience.

How meaningful is the following saying of the master of humanity concerning patience and thankfulness:

How remarkable a believer's affair is, for it is always to his advantage, and such a condition is only for a believer. If something good happens to him he thanks God, which is to his advantage; if something bad happens to him he endures it, which is also to his advantage.

The characteristics of patience can be grouped into five categories: enduring difficulties associated with being a true servant of God or steadfastness in performing regular acts of worship; resisting temptations of the carnal self and Satan to commit sins; enduring heavenly or earthly calamities, which includes resignation to Divine decrees; being steadfast in following the right path and not allowing worldly attractions to cause deviation; and showing no haste in realizing hopes or plans that require a certain length of time to achieve.

With respect to its degrees, patience can be divided into six categories: showing patience for the sake of God; showing patience and attributing it to God (being convinced that God enables one to show patience); enduring patiently whatever comes from God, knowing that He acts from His Wisdom; being resigned to whatever happens in the way of God; showing patience by not disclosing the mysteries of one's achieved spiritual station and to preserve one's nearness to God; and resolving to fulfill one's mission of communicating God's Message to people despite one's deepest desire to die and meet with God.

There are other definitions of patience as well. For example, preserving one's manners in the face of misfortune; being steadfast when confronted with events, and showing no sign of being deterred; never giving in to one's carnal desires and the impulses of one's temperament; accepting the commandments of the Qur'an and the Sunna as a sort of invitation to Paradise; and sacrificing all possessions, including one's soul and beloved ones, for the sake of the True, Beloved One.

Those Qur'anic interpreters who were interested in the text's secret or esoteric meanings have made the following commentaries on the verse: Endure, vie with each other in endurance, and continue your relation with God (3:199):

Be steadfast in performing your religious duties, endure whatever displeasing thing happens to you, and maintain your love of God and desire to meet with Him. Or, be steadfast in fulfilling all your responsibilities for the sake of God and to please Him, and endure the difficulty of always being aware

of His constant supervision of you and feeling His omnipresence. Or, be steadfast in following the Straight Path without any deviation, even when Divine bounties pour out onto you. Resolve to endure all difficulties and hardships, and maintain your connection or adherence to God whatever happens to you.

Another approach to patience is to attribute to God Almighty whatever is in the universe and happens therein and, while giving thanks for what appears pleasing, being resigned to what appears displeasing. When a believer unburdens himself or herself to God while trying to overcome a misfortune or hardship, a responsibility that is very hard to fulfill, or sins that might be committed, this must not be considered a complaint against God. Rather, it is a believer's way of asking Him for help and seeking refuge in Him. In no way can such an action be considered a complaint or a protest against God or Divine Destiny. In reality, and according to one's intention, such an act may even be regarded as a supplication and an entreaty, as putting one's trust in Him or as submitting to Him.

The cry of Prophet Job, upon him be peace, to God: Truly distress (disease, tribulation) has seized me. But You are the Most Compassionate of the Compassionate (21:83) and the groaning of Prophet Jacob, upon him be peace: I only complain of my anguish and my sorrow unto God (12:86) are supplications or entreaties for God's pity and compassion. God Almighty praised Job, upon him be peace, for being an excellent servant distinguished with patience and supplications: We found him patient; how excellent a servant! Truly he was ever turning (to God) with supplications (38:44).

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Prophets and saints is their embodiment of patience in all of its manifold forms and degrees, and that without deviating from their utmost devotion to God, they do their best to communicate God's Message to people and bear all misfortune and difficulty arising there from. The glory of humanity, upon him be peace and blessings, who is a mercy for the whole of creation, declared: Among mankind, those who are stricken with the most terrible of misfortunes are the Prophets, and then follow others according to their degree of faith.

Patience is an essential characteristic of those believers who are the most advanced in belief, spirituality, nearness to God, and who guide others to the truth. It is, moreover, the source of power for those advancing toward this final point. Since the most advanced people experience the most misfortune, they are perfect embodiments of patience, which is the price they pay for the rank bestowed on them. Others who have been destined to advance to that final point cross the distances traveled by others through different and frequent acts of worship, by enduring whatever happens to them. Of these, God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, says:

If God Almighty has destined a servant of His to a rank or position which he cannot reach through his religious actions, He causes him to suffer from his own self and family, and equips him with patience to endure all his sufferings. He elevates him through patience to the rank to which he has destined him.

Thus the suffering to be endured, the difficulty in fulfilling one's responsibilities, and the pressure of sin contain potential mercy, mercy that is attracted by one's patience. One subjected to such affliction should not unburden himself or herself to anybody else. How beautifully Fuduli says:

You say you are a lover, then do not complain of the affliction of love;

By complaining, do not make others informed of your affliction.

Travelers on the path to God should know how to burn and boil with love or be consumed with affliction, but never complain to others of such love and affliction. Even if crushed by difficulty or responsibility as heavy as mountains, they should not complain to others.

Rumi summarizes such a degree of patience as follows:

In order to be sustenance for man, a source of strength for his knees, a "light" for his eyes, and a substance for the maintenance of his life, a grain of wheat must be buried in the bosom of the earth, germinate under it, and grow to emerge into the air. It must come into the air after a fierce struggle with the earth, and then be sown and threshed, and ground in a mill. After that, it must be kneaded, baked in an oven, and, finally, chewed by teeth, sent into the stomach, and digested.

To attain true humanity, each individual must be "sieved" or "distilled" many times to discover his or her true essence. Otherwise, the ability to develop one's potential to its fullest, to be truly human, is not possible:

It is expected of God's servant to suffer, And of an aloe wood to burn.

Patience is an essential and most important dimension of servanthood to God, and is crowned with resignation, the highest spiritual rank in the sight of God, to whatever God has destined.¹²

¹² Jun 1994, Vol 16, Issue 185, <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/sufism/key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-1/24746-sabr-patience>