

AS-SABR

(PATIENCE)

Definition:

Patience involves perseverance and striving in three areas:

1. Patiently persevering in obeying the orders of Allah and living our life as He instructed us.
2. Patiently persevering in controlling our desires and avoiding sin
3. Patience in accepting our fate and coping with our difficulties and not giving up or despairing or rejecting faith in the face of adversity.

Patience in Islam; therefore is an active process of striving to do our best in obeying Allah, controlling our desires and coping with our tests and trials. It is not passive acceptance of fate or giving up. Patience means renewing our faith and increasing our belief in Allah, and trying to change our fate into another fate that Allah may will for us.

Ibn Taimeya (May Allah be pleased with him) added another dimension to patience when he said,

“Good patience is that which does not entail complaints about how much difficulty we are experiencing or how difficult it is to cope with it.”

HOW CAN WE ACQUIRE PATIENCE?

Since patience involves firm belief in Allah and never despairing of His mercy, then the way to acquire such a noble character is through increasing our faith. This involves the following:

1. Understanding that tests and trials are to be expected.
2. Seeking help in prayer and in remembering Allah and turning to Him.
3. Never giving up hope of the mercy of Allah.
4. Following the example of Allah's prophets who were patient and determined.
5. Understanding the tremendous reward of patience and true faith.

TESTS AND TRIALS ARE TO BE EXPECTED

The Qur'an makes it clear that every one will be tested and tried. Our duty is to learn from these tests and trials and evolve and become better human beings. We do not look at tests as punishment, but as an opportunity to increase our faith in Allah.

﴿وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّىٰ نَعْلَمَ الْمُجْتَهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَنَبْلُوَ أَخْبَارَكُمْ﴾ [محمد: ٣١]

"And We shall try you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience; and We shall try your reported (mettle)" (Muhammad 47 : 31)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained that a true believer is patient and persevere during adversity, and is grateful to Allah during good times. This way he confirms his belief in Allah at both times, not despairing when times are difficult, nor behaving in arrogance when he is enjoying ease of life:

Sohaib (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

"I wonder for the affairs of the believer, all his affair is good for him, and this only happens to the believer: if he is experiencing ease and happiness he is grateful to Allah, and this is good for him. And if he is experiencing difficulty he is patient and this is good for him."

Narrated by Muslim

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also explained our duty in living with and cooperating with other people even though we may suffer harm or experience difficulty from their wrong behavior. We should not live in

isolation in order to avoid harm or personal injury. Such experience is part of our life and we should exhibit patience:

Ibn Omar (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

The believer who actively associates with other people and is patient regarding the harm he receives from them has greater reward than the believer who isolates himself from others and does not tolerate their harm."

Narrated by Termedhi, Ibn Majja and Ahmad

The Qur'an praises those true righteous believers who are patient and persevere in the face of all types of difficulties.

﴿وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ﴾ [البقرة: ١٧٧]

"And to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing" (Al-Baqara 2 : 177)

SEEKING HELP IN PRAYER AND TURN TO GOD

When we are facing difficulty, we are reminded to seek help in prayer and remembrance of Allah and to understand our accountability to Him.

﴿وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ﴾ [البقرة: ٤٥]

"Nay, seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer: it is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit,"

(Al-Baqara 2 : 45)

﴿الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلتَقُونَ رَبَّهُمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ﴾ [البقرة: ٤٦]

"Who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him" (Al-Baqara 2 : 46)

If we understand our duty to serve our Lord and that one day we are going to stand judgment before Him, then our behavior must reflect such

belief. He alone controls our life and our fate. If He had willed for us to experience a certain difficulty, then we should be patient and persevere staying the course. Turning to Him and seeking comfort in prayer will give us strength and resolve to withstand our difficulty. Contrast this behavior to someone who does not believe in Allah. When facing trouble he will question why he is being subjected to this test and trial for it is unfair, and any faith he might have will soon evaporate and disappear. He does not know what to do or where to turn. He has no source of strength from which he can draw. He is lost and easily gives up in despair.

Exhibiting patience in the face of adversity is a characteristic of those who are pious and understand that their Lord knows what they are experiencing.

﴿إِنْ تَمَسَّكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ وَإِنْ تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ﴾ [آل عمران: ١٢]

"If aught that is good befalls you, it grieves them; but if some misfortune overtakes you, they rejoice at it. But if ye are constant and do right, not the least harm will their cunning do to you; for Allah compasseth round about all that they do" (Al-Imran 3 : 120)

Allah is with those who are patient and who do good:

﴿وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ﴾ [النحل: ١٢٦]

"And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: but if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient" (An-Nahl 16 : 126)

﴿وَأَصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ۚ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَلٰٓئِلٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ﴾ [النحل: ١٢٦]

"And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from Allah; nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots" (An-Nahl 16 : 127)

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ﴾ [النحل: ١٢٨]

"For Allah is with those who restrain themselves, and those who do good" (An-Nahl 16 : 128).

NEVER GIVING UP HOPE OF GOD'S MERCY

True faith in Allah implies never giving up hope or despairing of Allah's mercy. Allah allowed such difficulty to afflict us and He knows well what we are going through. He is Wise and Just and does not place on us a burden more than what we are able to tolerate. Our job is to be patient and not give up hope of His mercy.

The Qur'an expressed such belief on the tongue of Prophet Jacob (Israel) when he advised his sons not to despair of Allah's soothing mercy. He lost his two children and became blind, but never gave up hope.

﴿يَبْنِي أَذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِنْ يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ وَلَا تَأْيِسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْيِسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾ [يوسف: ٨٧]

"O my sons! go ye and enquire about Joseph and his brother, and never give up hope of Allah's soothing Mercy: truly no one despairs of Allah's soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith"
(Yusuf 12 : 87)

Giving up hope or becoming despondent is not a characteristic of those who believe. Only those who are misguided would despair. On the tongue of Prophet Abraham, the Qur'an tells us,

﴿قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ﴾ [الحجر: ٥٦]

"He said: And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord, but such as go astray?" (Al-Hijr 15 : 56)

FOLLOW PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S EXAMPLE

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) faced much difficulty and experienced rejection from his own people. The Qur'an came ordering Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to exhibit patience as did previous messengers of firm resolve.

﴿ فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُو الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَهُمْ ۚ كَانَتْهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا يُوعَدُونَ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنْ نَّهَارٍ ۚ بَلَّغَ ۚ فَهَلْ يَهْلِكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴾
[الأحقاف: ٣٥]

"Therefore patiently persevere, as did (all) Messengers of inflexible purpose; and be in no haste about the (Unbelievers). On the Day that they see the (Punishment) promised them, (it will be) as if they had not tarried more than an hour in a single day. (Thine but) to proclaim the Message: but shall any be destroyed except those who transgress?" (Al-Ahqaf 46 : 35)

The Qur'an praises certain Prophets, particularly Prophet Job for his exemplary patience. His secret was that he turned often to Allah seeking His help and forgiveness:

﴿ وَخُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْثًا فَاصْرِبْ بِهِ ۚ وَلَا تَحْنَتْ ۚ إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا ۚ نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ ۚ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴾ [ص: ٤٤]

"And take in thy hand a little grass, and strike therewith: and break not (thy oath). Truly We found him full of patience and constancy, how excellent in Our service! ever did he turn (to Us)!" (Sa D 38 : 44)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained that we are tested according to our degree of faith, the stronger our faith, the more harsh is our test and obviously the greater our reward. That is why Allah's prophets are tested more severely than other human beings, and the righteous of Allah's servants are more frequently tested than those weak in faith.

Sad bin Abi Waqas (May Allah be pleased with him) related that he asked, O messenger of Allah who among mankind is tested the most? He said (PBUH),

The Prophets are tested the most, then the most righteous, a person is tested according to his faith, if his faith is strong, his test is more severe. If his faith is weak, his test is less according to his faith.

A person may be tested so often that he is left walking on earth with no sin at all.

Narrated by Termedhi and Ibn Majja

REWARDS OF PATIENCE

Patience and true faith in Allah is rewarded in various ways:

1. Our sins are forgiven.
2. We enter paradise.
3. We receive Allah's mercy, blessings and guidance.
4. Allah is with those who are patient.
5. The reward of those who are patient is unrivalled.

Forgiveness of sin

Those who believe and submit to Allah confirming their faith by exhibiting patience and perseverance during difficulty, Allah promised to forgive their sins. Whatever types of difficulty or trouble they experience remit their sins.

Aesha (May Allah be pleased with her) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

“Every calamity that afflicts a Muslim remits his sins, even a thorn that pierces his skin.”

Narrated by Muslim

A similar Hadith related by Abou Horaira & Abi Saed Al-Khudri (May Allah be pleased with them both) states,

“Whatever afflicts the Muslim of tiredness, pain, anguish, sorrow, harm or sadness, even a thorn that pierces him, till his sins are remitted because of these afflictions.

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

Paradise is the reward of those who are patient

Those who believe and confirm their faith in their good deeds and exhibit patience during difficulty, are promised paradise,

﴿ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيَلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِمَنْ ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَلَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ ﴾ [الفصل: ٨٠]

"But those who had been granted (true) knowledge said: "Alas for

you! The reward of Allah (in the Hereafter) is best for those who believe and work righteousness: but this none shall attain, save those who steadfastly persevere (in good)" (Al-Qasas 28 : 80)

Those who patiently persevere receive Allah's mercy, blessings and guidance

When faced with the loss of a loved one or with calamity, the response of the believers should be patient perseverance and understanding that Allah alone controls their fate and destiny. The Qur'an promises such true patient servants of Allah three great rewards:

Allah's blessings and grace

Allah's mercy

Allah's guidance

﴿وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَنَشِيرُ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾ [البقرة: ١٥٥]

"Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere" (Al-Baqara 2 : 155)

﴿الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ﴾ [البقرة: ١٥٦]

"Who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return" (Al-Baqara 2 : 156)

﴿أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْتَخِرُونَ﴾ [البقرة: ١٥٧]

"They are those on whom (descend) blessings from their Lord, and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance"

(Al-Baqara 2 : 157)

Allah is with those who are patient and persevere

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained the great benefit and reward

of patience in a Hadith related by Abi Saed Al-Khudri (May Allah be pleased with him).

Whoever avoids asking others and is content with what he has, Allah will make him sufficient; and whoever depends on himself Allah will enrich him, and whoever patiently persevere Allah will grant him the ability to be patient. No one was given a gift better or more encompassing than the gift of patience.

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

The Qur'an emphasizes that Allah is with those who are patient, meaning that He will help them and supports them:

﴿الَّذِينَ خَفَّفَ اللَّهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِيكُمْ ضَعْفًا فَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أَلْفٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفَيْنِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾
[الأنفال: ٦٦]

"For the present, Allah has lightened your (task), for He knows that there is a weak spot in you: but (even so), if there are a hundred of you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred, and if a thousand, they will vanquish two thousand, with the leave of Allah: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere"

(Al-Anfal 8 : 66)

The reward of those who patiently persevere is unrivalled

Allah's reward is unrivalled for those who are patient and persevere in adversity. They truly confirmed their belief in their life; therefore, there is no accountability on them and their reward is limitless.

﴿قُلْ يٰٓعِبَادِ ٱللَّهِ ءَامِنُوا ٱتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ ٱلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِى هَذِهِ ٱلدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَأَرْضُ ٱللَّهِ وَٰسِعَةٌ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّٰبِرُونَ أَجْرَهُم بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ﴾ [الزمر: ١٠]

"Say: O ye My servants who believe! fear your Lord. Good is (the reward) for those who do good in this world. Spacious is Allah's earth! those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure!" (Az-Zumar 39 : 10)

Allah will reward them according to the best of their deeds.

﴿ مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ [النحل: ٩٦]

"What is with you must vanish: what is with Allah will endure. And We will certainly bestow, on those who patiently persevere, their reward according to the best of their actions" (An-Nahl 16 : 96)

BENEFITS OF PATIENCE

- Being able to withstand our difficulties, tests and trials.
- Avoiding anger or rash decisions.
- Avoiding fear or despair.
- Not looking for excuses.
- Controlling our desires and becoming masters of ourselves.
- Earning Allah's blessings, mercy and guidance.
- Is a sign of noble character, that makes a person beloved to others.