

Due striving for Allah' s approval

Man strives hard to attain worldly favors, on which he sets his mind as being the ultimate goal in life. He does his utmost to gain material prosperity, recognition of social status or some other worldly benefit. For **“a paltry price” (Surat at-Tawba: 9)** that will slip out of his hands in a very short while, he makes an all-out effort.



Muslims, who aspire to a much greater reward, that is, to the approval of Allah and His Garden, also strive hard for their cause. A believer strives with “all due striving” for the approbation of Allah and for the Hereafter. He “sells” his property and his life for the cause of Allah.

No difficulty a believer encounters in the way of Allah thwarts his commitment, provided that he has sold “his property and self” to Allah. Nothing but Allah’s approbation has any attraction for him. Aware that he is not the “owner” of his body and property, he never follows the vain desires of the self (nafs). Allah is the owner of his body and everything he owns, and they will be put to service in compliance with Allah’s will.

The only criterion for being a believer is to feel a sincere desire to seek Allah’s approval and not to refrain from making any sacrifices on the way of Allah when circumstances call for such sacrifices. Believers are those who are **“purified with a pure thought, remembrance of the Home (of the Hereafter)” (Surah Sad: 46)**. A believer does not seek any benefit other than Allah’s approbation. He hopes to please Allah, have His mercy and attain Paradise, because **“anyone, male or female, who does right actions and is a believer, will enter Paradise. They will not be wronged by so much as the tiniest speck.” (Surat an-Nisa’: 124)**

Paradise is the abode of those who **“believe with certainty”** in Allah and the Hereafter **(Surah Luqman: 4)** and then “strive with all due striving” in the way of Allah. The end of those who “worship Allah right on the fringe of true faith” and place their trivial worldly interests right next to the pleasure of Allah is described thus in the Qur’an:

Among the people there are some who profess to serve Allah but who stand on the very fringe of good faith. If good befalls them, they are content, but if an ordeal befalls them, they revert to their former ways, losing both this world and the hereafter. That way true perdition lies. (Surat al-Hajj: 11)

Believers are covetous of the Hereafter. Allah promises believers a beautiful endless life in the hereafter. Our Lord promises believers that He will give a good life to His believing servants in this world, too. Yet this in no way means that they will not encounter any hardship and troubles in this world. The afflictions they encounter are devised to put them to the test and make them more mature.

The obstacles a believer encounters are ostensibly difficult situations; but once met with submission, Allah relieves him of all difficulties. For instance, when his people attempted to cast the Prophet Ibrahim (as) into the fire because of his faith, his response was the one peculiar to a Muslim; he favored being thrown into the fire over turning away from his faith or Allah's commands. Being cast into a fire is the most terrible physical suffering that might befall any human being in this world. However, Ibrahim (as), who faced this trial from Allah in the most submissive manner, was saved from this seemingly trying experience by the will of Allah, and no harm came to him.

He said, "Do you then worship, instead of Allah, what cannot help or harm you in any way? Shame on you and what you worship besides Allah! Will you not use your intellect?" They said, "Burn him and avenge your deities if you are resolved to punish him!" We said, "Fire, be coolness and peace for Ibrahim!" They sought to trap him but We made them the losers. (Surat al-Anbiya': 66-70)

Conclusively, no distress, difficulty or sorrow affect a believer who seeks Allah's consent and observes His commands. This is demonstrated in the course of events by which Allah puts a believer's determination, patience and submission to the test. These are outwardly troublesome and difficult events; but if met with patience and submission they allow the individual to discover Allah's mercy. This aside, Allah informs us in the Qur'an that He does not burden any soul with more than it can bear:

Allah does not impose on any self any more than it can stand. (Surat al-Baqara: 286)

Allah does not punish a believer who duly serves Him, neither in this world nor in the Hereafter. On the contrary, He rewards him most bountifully both in this world and beyond:

When the righteous are asked, "What has your Lord sent down?" their reply is, "That which is best." There is good in the world for those who do good, but far better is the reward of the life to come. How wonderful is the abode of the righteous: The Gardens of Eden which they enter, with rivers flowing under them, where they shall have whatever they desire. That is how Allah repays the righteous. (Surat an-Nahl: 30-31)

As a reminder from Allah, torment, difficulty and trouble are inflicted on those who fail to seek the approval of Allah, who do not demonstrate absolute submission to Him but rather observe the wishes of their own souls.

When believers make a mistake, they consider the trouble and difficulties they suffer as a consequence as a merciful warning from Allah, carefully derive lessons from them, repent and amend their conduct. Unbelievers, however, never learn from the ordeals they undergo, thereby deserving eternal torment in the Hereafter.

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