



UNIS

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STEADFASTNESS

Praise be to Allah; we praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our own selves and from our evil deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides cannot be led astray, and whomsoever He leaves astray cannot be guided. I bear witness that there is no god except Allah alone, with no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

Steadfastness in the religion of Allah is a basic requirement for every sincere Muslim who wants to follow the Straight Path with determination and understanding. This matter is of great importance for a number of reasons, including the following:

1. The present situation of the societies in which Muslims live, the types of temptation to which they are painfully exposed and the kinds of whims and desires, doubts and confusion which have caused religion to become something strange. The effort and steadfastness required now is greater, because of the corruption of our times, and the scarcity and weakness of brothers and supporters who could help.

2. The relationship of this issue to the heart, of which the Prophet (sallal-laho alaihe wassalam = saw) said: *"It changes more than a pot of rapidly boiling water."* The Prophet (saw) also gave another example of the heart: *"The heart (qalb) takes its name from its constant changes (taqallub – alteration, variation, ups and downs).*

Making the one stand firm who is tossed about by the winds of doubt and

confusion is a serious matter which needs tremendous means and effort.

It is part of Allah's mercy towards us that He has shown to us, in His Book, and through the words and life of His Prophet (saw) many ways of being steadfast in Islam. Some of these are discussed below:

Turning towards the Qur'aan

The Qur'aan is the foremost aid to standing firm in Islam. It is the strong rope and clear light of Allah. Whoever adheres to it, Allah will protect him; whoever follows it, Allah will save him; and whoever calls to its way will be guided to the Straight Path.

Allah has stated that the reason why this Book was revealed in stages was to help His Prophet (saw) to stand firm in his faith. In the context of refuting the doubts of the kuffaar, He says: *"And those who disbelieve say, 'Why is not the Qur'aan revealed to him all at once?' Thus (it is sent down in parts), that We may strengthen your heart thereby."* [al-Furqaan 25:32]

Why is the Qur'aan such a source of strength?

1. Because it cultivates faith and purifies the soul through contact with Allah.

2. Because these aayaat (verses) bring peace and tranquility to the heart of the believer and their heart will be content with the remembrance of Allah.

3. Because it provides the Muslim with the correct understanding and values with which he will be able to evaluate the situation around him. It also gives

him the standards against which he may judge things in a proper and consistent manner.

4. Because it refutes the doubts that are stirred up by the enemies of Islam, kuffaar (disbelievers) and munaafiqeen (hypocrites) alike, as in the following examples from the early days of Islam:

a. The effect of the aayah *"Your Lord (O Muhammad) has neither forsaken you nor hated you"* [al-Duhaa 93:3] on the heart of the Prophet (saw), when the mushrikoon (disbelievers) said, *"Muhammad has been forsaken..."*

Is it not the greatest of help, strengthening the heart of the believer, refuting doubts and silencing the voices of falsehood? Indeed it is, by Allah.

Adhering to the laws of Allah and doing righteous deeds

Allah says: *"Allah will keep firm those who believe, with the word that stands firm in this world and in the Hereafter. And Allah will cause to go astray those who are zaalimoon (polytheists and wrong-doers, etc.), and Allah does what He wills."* [Ibrahim 14:27].

Qutaadah said: *"As for the life of this world, Allah will help them to be steadfast in doing good and righteous deeds, and in the Hereafter (He will help them) to remain steadfast in the grave."*

So the Prophet (saw) used to persevere in doing righteous deeds, and the most beloved of good deeds to him were those that were continuous, even if they were small. The Prophet (saw) used to say: *"Whoever perseveres in*

doing twelve rak'ahs [i.e., the sunnah prayers which the Prophet (saw) did constantly], Paradise will be his right."

Studying the stories of the Prophets and following their example

The evidence for this is the aayah: *"And all that We relate to you (O Muhammad) of the news of the Messengers is in order that We may make strong and firm your heart thereby. And in this has come to you the truth, as well as an admonition and a reminder for the believers."* [Hood 11:120].

These aayaat were not revealed at the time of the Messenger of Allah (saw) for the purpose of mere entertainment and amusement. They were revealed for an important purpose, which was to strengthen the heart of the Prophet (saw) and likewise the hearts of the believers.

1. Think about the story of Ibrahim when he was thrown into the fire. Ibn 'Abbaas said: *"The last thing Ibrahim said when he was thrown in the fire was, 'Allah is Sufficient for me and He is the Best Disposer of affairs.'"* (Al-Fath, 8/22) Do you not feel how he stood firm in the face of oppression and torture, when you read this story?

2. Read the story of the magicians of Pharaoh, which is an example of a small group that adhered firmly to the truth once it had become apparent to them. Do you not see how they stood firm in the face of threats issued by the oppressor who said, *"Believe you in him (Moosa) before I give you permission? Verily! He is your chief who taught you magic. So I will surely cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will surely crucify you on the trunks of date-palms, and you shall surely know which of us [I (Pharaoh) or the Lord of Moosa] can give the severe and more lasting torment."* [Ta-Ha 20:71]. The small group of believers stood firm, with no thought of retreat, and said: *"We prefer you not over the clear signs that have come to us, and to Him Who created us. So decree whatever you desire to decree,*

for can only decree (regarding) the life of this world." [Ta-Ha 20:72].

Du'aa' (supplication)

One of the characteristics of the believing slaves of Allah is that they turn to Allah with du'aa', asking Him to help them to stand firm: *"Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate (from the truth) after You have guided us..."* [Aal 'Imraan 3:8 – interpretation of the meaning]; *"Our Lord! Pour out constancy [patience] on us and make our steps firm..."* [al-Baqarah 2:250 – Yousuf 'Ali's translation].

The Messenger of Allah often used to say, "O Controller of the hearts, make my heart adhere firmly to Your religion."

Remembrance of Allah (dhikr)

This is one of the greatest means of being steadfast in Islam.

Think about the combination described in this aayah: *"O you who believe! When you meet (an enemy) force, take a firm stand against them and remember the Name of Allah much, so that you may be successful."* [al-Anfaal 8:45]. Dhikr is one of the most effective aids to standing firm in jihaad.

How did Yousuf stand firm in the face of temptation of the part of the powerful and beautiful woman who called him to do wrong? Did he not by "seeking refuge in Allah" defeat the waves of temptation? This is the effect of adhkaar (remembering Allah) on making the believers steadfast.

Training and education

Gradual, conscious training in faith, based on knowledge, is one of the basic factors in standing firm in Islam.

Training in faith is that which fills the heart and consciousness with fear, hope and love (of Allah), as opposed to the dryness which results from ignoring the texts of the Qur'aan and Sunnah and devoting too much attention to the material world. Conscious training is that which

recognizes the way of the sinners and wrongdoers, and properly understands and evaluates reality and events. Gradual training is that which takes the Muslim step by step towards achieving perfection with proper planning.

In order to understand the importance of this element in standing firm, let us go back to the seerah (biography) of the Messenger of Allah (saw) and ask ourselves, what was the source of the companions' steadfastness in Makkah, at the time of their persecution? How could Bilaal, Khabbaab, Mus'ab, the family of Yasir and other dispossessed Muslims stand firm? How could even the greatest of the sahabah (companions of the Prophet (saw)) stand firm when they were boycotted by others?

Is it possible that they could have stood firm without extensive training under the supervision of the Prophet (saw), which had honed and refined their personalities?

Take, for example, the companion Khabbaab ibn al-Arat, whose owner used to heat an iron skewer until it was red-hot, then place it on his bare back where it would burn until it was extinguished by the fat of his back flowing over it. What made him able to bear all that with patience and perseverance?

Having confidence in the road you are following

No doubt the more confident the Muslim is of the path he is following, the more steadfast he will be in adhering to it. There are many ways of achieving this, including the following:

1. Feeling that the way which you are following is not something new rather it is an ancient and venerable way which the Prophets, speakers of truth, martyrs and righteous people have followed before you. This will reduce your feelings of loneliness and replace your alienation with a sense of comfort, and your sadness will turn to joy because you will feel that all these people are your brothers in this way and methodology.

2. Feeling that you are among the chosen. Allah says: "...Praise and thanks be to Allah, and peace be on His slaves whom He has chosen (for His Message)! ..." [al-Naml 27:59]

"Then We gave the Book (the Qur'aan) for inheritance to such of Our slaves as We chose..." [Faatir 35:32]

Calling others to Allah (da'wah)

The soul that is not active will stagnate. One of the most important fields in which one can be active is the field of da'wah, calling others to Allah. This is the work of the Prophets, work which will save you from punishment, realize your potential and enable you to achieve great things. "Now then, for that (reason), call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast as you are commanded..." [al-Shoora 42:15].

Calling to the way of Allah by devoting time to it, making mental and physical efforts, and speaking out, so that da'wah becomes the main concern of the Muslim will block the Shaytaan's temptations and keep one steadfast. In addition to that, being challenged by obstacles and stubborn people on the journey of da'wah will make the one stronger in faith.

Keeping close to people who will help make you steadfast

These are people whose characteristics the Prophet (saw) referred to in the hadeeth, "Among the people are some who open the way to goodness and close the way to evil." Looking for scholars, righteous people and believing da'iyahs, and keeping close to them is a great help in remaining steadfast. When times of trial arose in Islamic history, Allah helped the Muslims to stand firm with the help of some individuals.

For example, 'Ali ibn al-Madeeni said: "Allah supported His Religion with al-Siddeeq [Abu Bakr] at the time of the Riddah (apostasy), and with Ahmad at the time of the test."

Think about what Ibn al-Qayyim said about the role of his shaykh, Shaykh al-Islam [Ibn Taymiyah] in helping Muslims to stand firm: "When our fear became too great and we began to think the worst and things got too difficult for us, we would come to him. We only had to see him and hear his words, and all that would go away, to be replaced by tranquility, strength, assurance and calmness. Glory be to the One Who made His slaves witness Paradise before their meeting with Him, opened its door to them in this world and caused them to feel its fragrant breezes so that they would devote all their energy to seeking it and competing for it."

Here Islamic brotherhood emerges as a basic source of steadfastness. Your righteous brothers, leaders and teachers are a source of help for you on the path, a strong pillar on which you can lean. They can make you more steadfast through the aayaat they know and the wisdom they possess... Stick with them and live among them; do not be alone, lest the shayaateen overwhelm you, for the sheep that the wolf eats is the one that wanders off away from the flock.

Being confident of the help of Allah, and that the future belongs to the 'True Message'

We need to stand firm even more when victory is delayed, so that we will not go astray after being steadfast. Allah says: "And many a Prophet fought (in Allah's Cause) and along with him (fought) large bands of religious learned men. But they never lost heart for that which did befall them in Allah's Way, nor did they weaken nor degrade themselves. And Allah loves al-saabireen (the patient ones). And they said nothing but: 'Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and our transgressions (in keeping our duties to You), establish our feet firmly, and give us victory over the disbelieving folk.' So Allah gave them the reward of this world, and the excellent reward of the Hereafter..." [Aal 'Imraan 3:146-148]

When the Messenger of Allah (saw) wanted to calm down his companions at times of persecution and testing, he told them that that the future belonged to Islam. The prophet (saw) said: "Allah will certainly complete this matter (i.e., Islam), until a traveler will be able to go from San'aa' to Hadramawt fearing nothing except Allah and the wolf that may attack his sheep."

Telling the young generation about this and other ahadith that give the good news of the future belonging to Islam is an important part of their education and training to stand firm in their religion.

Acquiring the characteristics that will help one to remain steadfast

The most important of these is *sabr* (patience). The Prophet (saw) said: "No one is given any gift greater and more bountiful than patience." The greatest patience comes at the onset of a disaster, and if something unexpected befalls a man, the disaster will overwhelm him and he will lose his steadfastness, if he does not have patience.

When the Muslims were defeated at Uhud, this was a disaster for them and Allah taught them a hard lesson through the blood of the martyrs.

"(What is the matter with you?) When a single disaster smites you, although you smote (your enemies) with one twice as great, you say: 'From where does this come to us?' Say (to them), 'It is from yourselves (because of your evil deeds).'..." [Aal 'Imraan 3:16]

"... you lost your courage and fell to disputing about the order, and disobeyed after He showed you (of the booty) which you love. Among you are some that desire this world..." [Aal 'Imraan 3:152].

Thinking about the delights of Paradise and the punishments of Hellfire, and remembering death.

Paradise is the abode of joy, the consolation of those who grieve, the

final destination of the believers. The one who knows about the reward will find it easy to work hard, because he will be aware that if he does not remain steadfast, he will miss out on Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth. The soul needs something to lift it above the dust of this earth and raise it to the heavenly world.

The Prophet (saw) used the mention of Paradise to encourage his Companions to stand firm. The Messenger of Allah (saw) passed by Yaasir, 'Ammar and Umm 'Ammar when they were being tortured for the sake of Allah and said, *"Patience, family of Yaasir, patience, family of Yaasir, for your destination is Paradise."*

Remembering death protects the Muslim from backsliding and helps him to adhere to the limits set by Allah, so that he does not transgress them. Hence the Prophet (saw) said: *"Always remember the destroyer of pleasure."*

Situations where steadfastness is required

There are many such situations, which need to be discussed in detail, but we can only list them in brief here.

Times of trial and tribulation

Trials and tribulations can cause the heart to change. Whether they are the trials of ease or of hardship, only those who have understanding and whose hearts are filled with faith can remain steadfast. Among the different types of trials are:

1. The trial of wealth. Allah says: *"And of them are some who made a covenant with Allah (saying): 'If He bestowed on us of His Bounty, we will verily give charity and will be certainly among those who are righteous. Then when He gave them of His Bounty, they became niggardly, and turned away, averse.'" [al-Tawbah 9:75-76]*

2. The trial of worldly power and authority. Allah says: *"And keep yourself patiently with those who call*

on their Lord morning and afternoon, seeking His Face, and let not your eyes overlook them, desiring the pomp and glitter of the life of the world; and obey not him whose heart We have made heedless of Our Remembrance, one who follows his own lusts and whose affair (deeds) has been lost." [al-Kahf 18:28].

Concerning the danger of these two types of trial, the Prophet (saw) said: *"Two hungry wolves sent against the sheep could not do more damage to them than the damage done by a man's eagerness for wealth and power to his religion."* The meaning is that a man's desire for wealth and power will do more damage to his religion than the damage done by two hungry wolves to a flock of sheep.

3. The trial of persecution, oppression and injustice. Al-Bukhaari reported from Khabbaab who said: *"We complained to the Messenger of Allah (saw) when he was reclining on his cloak in the shade of the Ka'bah. He (saw) said: "Among the people who came before you, there was a man who was taken and put into a hole dug for him in the earth, then a saw was put on his head and he was cut into two pieces, and an iron comb was used to tear the flesh from his bones, but this still did not turn him away from his religion."*

4. The trial of the Dajjaal (antichrist), which is the greatest trial in this world. The Prophet (saw) said: *"O people, there has never been any fitnah (trial) on the face of the earth since Allah created Adam greater than the trial of the Dajjaal... O slaves of Allah, O people, stand firm"*

Steadfastness at the time of death

The kuffaar and immoral people are denied steadfastness at the most difficult and stressful time, the time of death. They cannot utter the Shahaadah at the time of death, one of the signs of a bad end. Sometimes these people cannot say *Laa ilaaha ill-Allah* and sometimes they refuse to do so altogether. Other signs of these people

are darkened faces, or a foul odor, or turning away from the qiblah

But the people of righteousness, who follow the Sunnah, are helped by Allah to stand firm at the time of death, and so they utter the Shahaadatayn. You may see some of them with a cheerful face and a pleasant scent, looking as if they are hearing good news when their souls are taken from their bodies.

These are the ones of whom Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): *"Verily, those who say: 'Our Lord is Allah (Alone),' and then they stood straight (followed Islam truly), on them the angels will descend (at the time of their death) (saying): 'Fear not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of Paradise which you have been promised!'" [Fussilat 41:30]*

Conclusion

With regard to the heart and the trials it is subjected to, the Prophet (saw) said: *"Hearts are exposed to trials one after the other. Any heart that succumbs to them is stained with a black spot, and any heart that resists them becomes pure white, until all hearts of one of these two types. The white heart is intensely white and will not be harmed by any trial so long as heaven and earth remain, and the black heart is intensely black and does not recognize good or forbid evil, except what suits its own whims and desires."*

O Allah, make us among them. O Allah, we ask you to make us adhere to Islam with determination and wisdom. And the end of our prayer is: praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

Editorial

Assalamu Alakium

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