



Getting help through Sabr and Prayer

Ours is an age of haste and constant complaining. Technological changes have speeded up our lives and journeys that once took months now take only a few hours. As a consequence we want instant results. Patience is becoming a rare commodity. Nothing seems to be able to stop man from getting his way. With his bulldozers he can easily erase the scenic and rolling hills, with his dynamite he can blow away mountains, and with his crazy mind burn down several thousand square miles of ancient rainforest. With this incredible power, man has become a superman, strong and mighty, but sadly unable to control a peanut sized 'amygdala' within his brain. The amygdala controls emotions by producing autonomic and endocrine changes, this is the 'emotional computer' and it is the neural hub of our emotions. Divine versions are teaching us to control this emotional computer, through means of sabr and prayer. The Arabic word 'sabr' has several meanings and there is no single English word that can adequately convey its true meaning. Patience, as translated by many people, implies following reason and restraining fear and desire. In the Tafsir Haqqani, Imam Razi (544-504 AH) says 'Sabr is to subdue the ego to comply with the distasteful and difficult things for the sake of God and to avoid complaining and who ever can make himself humble in this way will be obedient and capable of enduring the difficulties of worship and be able to avoid the forbidden things.' (Tafsir-e-Kabir)

So, sabr refers to being thoughtful rather than hasty, persevering and being firm in times of difficulty, adopting a cheerful mood in sorrow and suffering, and being able to control ones emotions, such as fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, happiness and anger.

The reward for being patient is most sweet; God's company! What a marvellous reward it is to feel God by your side. When the Creator and Almighty is besides you, how then can you feel hopeless or grieve and be sad? Islam teaches sabr for it is a powerful tool for controlling emotions, which determine human behaviour. The blessed Messenger ﷺ urged his followers to acquire this tool, he ﷺ said: "How strange is the believer! God has decreed only good for him, in happiness he is thankful and that is good for him, in sorrow he is patient and that too is good for him." (Muslim, narrated by Suhaib ibn Sinan)

The blessed Messenger ﷺ taught a simple formula to overcome the grief that strikes in adversity, sorrow and at a calamity. He ﷺ said "When adversity strikes a person and he says 'to God we belong and to Him we are returning. Oh God! Reward me in adversity, and compensate me with better than this.' And God does reward him and full compensate him." (Muslim)

Here is another Hadith, which clearly illustrates the great value of patience and controlling ones emotions, fears and desires. Abi Sinan says "I had just buried my son in the grave when Abu Talha gave me his hand and helped me climb out and he said 'shall I tell you the good news?' I said 'yes' and he narrated the blessed Messenger ﷺ as saying: "God says: 'O angel of death! You have bought death upon the child of my servant, you have taken away from him the coolness of his eyes and his beloved darling.' The angel replies 'yes.' 'What did he say?' God asks 'He praised you and read Istarjah.' God says 'Build for him a house in paradise and name it 'The House of Praise' " (Ahmed)

O' You who believe! Seek My help with patience and prayer: surely, Allah is with those who are patient.

Do not say about those who are slain in the cause of Allah (martyrs), that they are dead. Nay, they are alive, but you do not perceive it.

We shall surely test your steadfastness with fear and famine, with loss of property, life and produce.

Give good news to those who endure with patience;

who, when afflicted with calamity, say: "We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return."

Such are the people on whom there are blessings and Mercy from Allah; and they are the ones that are rightly guided.