

Seeking Refuge in God During Difficulty and Ease

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Praised be God. Praised be God. Praised be God; a praise commensurate to His bounties and equivalent to His plentiful blessings. O our Lord, for you is praise befitting Your sublime essence and Your majestic Dominion. Transcendent are You; O God I am unable to enumerate Your exaltations, for You are as You exalt Yourself. I testify that there is no deity except God alone, who has no partner, and I testify that Muhammad is His slave, His Messenger, and His pure and intimate friend; the best Prophet God sent. God sent him to the whole world as a bearer of glad tidings and as a warner. O God send your mercy, peace, and blessings upon our master Muhammad¹ and upon the family of our master Muhammad; continuous peace and blessings that last until the Day of Judgement.

I exhort you, O Muslims, and my wrongful self, to fear² God, the Exalted.

O slaves of God, God the Sublime and Magnificent described the state of some of His slaves in His exact exposition, **“Whenever you suffer distress at sea, all those you call for help fail you, save He, yet when He brings you safely to land you turn away. Indeed man is ungrateful. Are you confident that He will not cause a slope of the land to engulf you or let loose a storm upon you? Then you shall find no protector. Or are you confident that He will not send you back a second time and send against you a violent wind and drown you for your disbelief and you will have no argument against Us.”**³

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1. An invocation that is recited each time the name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned.
 2. The Arabic term “*taqwa*” is often translated as fear or piety. It is a concept that may be defined as following the commands of God and avoiding His prohibitions with reverence and awe for the majesty of God. *Taqwa* gives rise to the protection of God.
 3. A translation of the meaning of a verse from the Qur'an: chapter no 17: verse no. 67-69: i.e. Q (17:67-69).

Some slaves of God, the Sublime and Magnificent, describe their state using this eloquent speech. When calamity takes them by surprise the trial appears to them as if it emerged out of its own accord and when it passes only then they will change from being in a precarious state to one of safety. One of them may be tested with poverty such that he only sees the calamity as this state that has taken him by surprise and due to it he feels injury and suffering. He imagines that when this state passes he will ease into safety and tranquillity.

And perhaps he has been tested by an illness and he becomes fixated that the affliction only springs from this state that distresses him, from this illness that befalls his being. When he is healed and freed from its torments and agonies then he will be able to secure well-being and a comfortable life for himself.

And perhaps an enemy has confronted him, depriving him of his peace and security. He holds to the notion that the distress is due to the one who confronts him. When the enemy comes to an end and the enmity recedes then he will return to a state of security and peace; assuming that the tribulation will leave him and that he will now live in a fortress of peace.

However this depiction is an incorrect depiction. The declaration of God, the Transcendent and Exalted, informs us of the gravity of this mistake, which many people are prone to make.

The calamity is not the unsettling of the sea and you being threatened with drowning such that if you find yourself on dry land you imagine that the tribulation has passed and that the danger has passed you by. No, the affliction descends upon you from a divine height and does not emanate from the natural world. It is God who wishes to tests you with poverty. He may try you with wealth; wealth is a greater affliction than the poverty you suffered from. God is the one who tests you with illness, that deprives you of comfort and peace. Perhaps God, the Sublime and Magnificent, will heal you and from this healing that you enjoy springs overflowing tribulation and greater calamity.

Yes, this is the meaning of the speech of God, the Sublime and Magnificent, **“Are you confident that He will not cause a slope of the and to engulf you or let looses a storm upon you? Then you shall find no protector.”**⁴ And this the same meaning that the divine declaration diverts our attention to when He says,

4. Q (17: 68)

“Are you confident that He who is in the sky [ie His dominion] will not cause the earth to seek beneath you and then to quake. Or are you confident that He who is in the sky [ie His dominion] will not send against you a sandy whirlwind? You will come to know how terrible was my warning.”⁵

How often man imagines that the earth is a cradle that God, the Sublime and Magnificent, has made as a cause of felicity, peace and comfort and made it a treasure trove of all his wishes. Yet he forgets that this God, Who has truly made a cradle from this earth, if He wishes, may make it the your means of destruction. From the earth He has made empty mouths that will swallow you up, nay, swallow a nation in one fell swoop. Listen o slaves of God to the declaration of God, the Magnificent and Sublime, and how He makes known to us the various- if this adjective is allowed- destroyers of His slaves that He has destroyed. He destroyed them using many means that we consider to be causes of felicity. He destroyed some of them using water which God has made the secret of life, **“We made from water every living thing”⁶**. God, the Sublime and Magnificent, destroyed many nations with gentle breezes of air that are the sources of life’s rejuvenation and continuity. God, the Transcendent and Sublime, destroyed peoples by means of this earth, which He has made a cradle for mankind; not like the cradle that the mother prepares for the child. **“Each of them we seized for his wrongdoing; on some we sent a sandy whirlwind; others were seized by the Cry. Some we caused the earth to swallow and some We drowned. It was not for God to wrong them, by they wronged themselves.”⁷**

Have you perceived the instructive meaning drawn to our attention by this declaration of God? He says to us all, o slaves of God, fear the One who sends the calamity upon you whenever He wishes and delights you blessing whenever He so desires. Do not make your fear of the spectre of calamity itself. The calamity is a pawn from amongst the pawns of God, the Magnificent and Mighty. How often does He make from this pawn a cause of blessing and a means of felicity. Yes, this is what the declaration of God, the Transcendent and Exalted, informs us.

5. Q (67: 16-17)

6. Q (21:30)

7. Q (29: 40)

If only mankind was aware of this divine enlightenment then his imagination and conscious feelings will always be directed towards God, the Exalted and Transcendent. He would confront a calamity seeking refuge in God, the Transcendent and Sublime and he would ask Him with the humility of his servitude to make this calamity distant from him and asking God for well-being in the manner of the Messenger of God, May God send his peace and blessings upon him, who asked, "Your well-being encompasses me."

When the calamity passes, he remains seeking refuge in God, the Sublime and Magnificent, because he knows that the hour in which he enjoys a comfortable life, the hour in which he delights in well-being and health, perhaps will turn. Change in an instant to a cause of misery, to a cause of a hard life and agonising torments which have no limit. Hence he is always seeking refuge in God. Seeking refuge in God during difficulty and asking Him to cast out this difficulty. Seeking refuge in God during ease; asking Him, the Sublime and Magnificent, to remain in this ease and asking God, the Sublime and Magnificent, to not transform his ease into difficulty. He remembers the counsel of Abd-Allah bin Abbas that the Messenger of God advised him with, "Get to know God in ease and He will know you in difficulty."

O slaves of God, this is the state of many of us. They seek refuge in God, the Sublime and Magnificent, during difficulty fleeing from it. Until he breathes a deep sigh as the calamity passes and he forgets God whom he was seeking refuge in. The difficulty vanishes and with it the seeking refuge in God.

How often we have seen peoples tested with poverty after wealth or tested with illness and well-being and when one of them knock on the doors of the righteous asking each one of them, "Do you know a supplication that if I were to use it to ask God to relieve this difficulty, that I suffer from, He would relieve it from me?" When he comes to know a formula from amongst the formulae of supplications he begins to repeat it as if he were a child memorising his homework. God honours him with well-being after sickness and God honours him with wealth after poverty. He forgets what he used to do because his seeking refuge was only in fear in of the calamity, itself, and not in fear of the Sender of it and He is God, the Transcendent and Exalted.

Slaves of God, I am astonished in front of the scene of a child who does not perceive and conversely I see the examples of those whom God has bestowed intelligence and experience of life and I find that this child is closer to understanding and certitude than many of our examples. The father carries his child between his arms and embraces him and the son, the child is reassured that he is guarded under the care of his father and his father overlooks a cliff edge. The child does not look at this bottomless edge unless he is clinging to his father, until he is adhering to his father. He is in the breast of his father and the arms of his father encompass him. Yes, he knows that he is guarded by the care of his father but he sees that tribulation is close at hand. He knows that the source of his security is his father and the source of his misery and danger that may encircle him is the turning away of his father from him. Hence he remains clinging to his father; he remains in every state adhering to the chest of his father. This is the state of this child. As for the man from our previous examples, as for the intelligent one who knows the secrets of life, should he not have even more reason to know this reality?

We all, o brothers, look down upon calamities with vision and inner sight. They are close to all of us. We see them at hand and know that they are on the brink of befalling us. We know- or it is necessary that we know- that the source of these calamities is our Master and our Creator. The source of tests is God, the Mighty and Magnificent. Is he not the one who says, **“And We test you with evil and with good as a trial. And to Us you shall be returned.”**⁸

We know this reality, so why do we not do what this child does? Why do we not cling to the mercy of God and His loving kindness? Why do we not persist seeking refuge in God, the Mighty and Magnificent, during ease just as we seek refuge in Him during difficulty? Why is our affair not like the affair of this child? Nay why do we not learn from this child when he seeks refuge in his father and when he gazes with his two eyes turning aside in fear as if he is saying to his father, ‘O father do not abandon me. O father do not leave me because of the imminent danger I see around me’ yet he is in a state of security and he is in a state of peace. Where are we, o slaves of God, with regards to discerning this

8. Q (21:35)

expression of the relationship between slaves and our Lord and our Master, the Transcendent and Exalted?

One of us flees to God when an adversity encircles him; poverty, illness or a threatening enemy. When God, the Sublime and Magnificent, answers his prayer and relieves his agony you look at him and he has returned to his heedlessness, returned to his concerns and lower world. It as if the affliction has ceased and it is impossible for it to return; as if the compassionate hand that rescued him from poverty and illness is not able to return and afflict him with an evil from that distress that previously struck him. This is the condition of a group of people and God, the Sublime and Magnificent, has described them as you have heard. I will return and remind myself and remind you of the divine eloquent elucidation expressing this meaning, may it make us rise to the instruction, **“Whenever you suffer distress at sea, all those you call for help fail you, save He, yet when He brings you safely to land you turn away. Indeed man is ungrateful. Are you confident that He will not cause a slope of the land to engulf you or let loose a storm upon you? Then you shall find no protector. Or are you confident that He will not send you back a second time and send against you a violent wind and drown you for your disbelief and you will have no argument against Us.”**

You, o son of Adam are in the grasp of the Merciful. You, o son of Adam are in the grasp of God, the Transcendent and Exalted, and He does with you whatsoever he wishes. Be like the child who gazes seeking the mercy of his father. Be like this child who adheres to the chest of his father. However, we must know that our Friend: He is God. We must know that the source of affliction, the source of bliss, the source of felicity and unhappiness; the source of all of them is God, the Transcendent and Exalted. When man rises to the station of servitude towards God in his states of ease and difficulty, he must know that God, the Sublime and Magnificent, will generously reward him and make him attain a happy outcome that awaits him in the Hereafter.

I deliver this sermon and seek the forgiveness of God, the Majestic.