

Dealing with Worries and Stress

English Translation

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1. Introduction:

Praise be to Allaah, the Lord of the Worlds, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate, the Master of the Day of Judgement. I bear witness that there is no god but He, the Lord of the earlier and later generations and Sustainer of heaven and earth. Peace and blessings be upon the one who was sent as a Mercy to the worlds. I bear witness that he is the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Peace and blessings be upon him, upon all his Family and Companions, and upon those who believe in his guidance and follow in his footsteps until the Day of Judgement.

It is the nature of this life that people will suffer from worries and stress, because this world is the place of disease, hardship and suffering. Hence among the things that distinguish Paradise from this world is the fact that there is no worry or stress there: “*No sense of fatigue shall touch them, nor shall they (ever) be asked to leave.*” [al-Hijr 15:48 – interpretation of the meaning]. Nothing ever upsets the people of Paradise, not even the slightest word: “*No laghw (dirty, false, evil vain talk) will they hear therein, nor any sinful speech (like backbiting, etc.), but only the saying of Salaam! Salaam! (greetings with peace).*” [al-Waaqi’ah 56:25-26 – interpretation of the meaning].

It is also the nature of this life that people have to put up with suffering and hardship for various reasons, as is indicated in the Qur’aan (interpretation of the meaning): “*Verily, We have created man in toil.*” [al-Balad 90:4]. So people feel regret for what has happened in the past, anxious about what may happen in the future, and worried about what is going on in the present.

The things that cross our minds and make us feel distressed are things in the past that have caused grief, things in the future that we are worried about, and things in the present which concern us.

People react differently to stress and worries, depending on how many things are concerning them, whether the worry is continuous or not, and on whether they have faith in their hearts or are rebellious and sinful. We may describe people's hearts as being of two types: either the heart is the throne of Allaah, filled with light, life, happiness, joy and all the treasures of goodness; or it is the throne of Shaytaan, wherein is distress, darkness, death, grief, worry and anxiety.

People's worries and concerns will also differ, according to the differences in their motivations, circumstances and individual responsibilities.

One type of worry or concern is that which may be described as **worthwhile worries** that are a good sign, such as a scholar's anxiety to resolve difficult issues concerning which the Muslims need an answer – especially when the matter is very serious and there appears to be no solution. Another example is the concern of the Muslim leader about the problems of the people under his care. This is what made the two 'Umars (i.e. 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab and 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azeez) and other leaders worried and anxious. 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab used to think about how to prepare the army whilst he was praying, and he was excused for that; he also used to worry about the animals stumbling in the land of 'Iraq. 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azeez used to express his suffering thus: "I am dealing with something with which no one could help me except Allaah. The elderly have reached the ends of their lives with it (in this situation), the youth have grown up with it; the foreigners have learnt Arabic and the Bedouin have migrated to the cities in these circumstances. [It is so well-entrenched] that they think this is religion, and they can see the truth nowhere else but in this." When the *khilaafah* passed to him and the people gave their *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance) to him, he came home, feeling anxious and stressed. His freed slave said to him: "Why do I see you so anxious and stressed? This is not how you should be on such an occasion as this." He said, "Woe to you! How could I not be anxious when there is no one in the East nor the West of this *ummah* who is not demanding his rights of me or asking me to help settle some matter with another person, whether he writes down his request or not, whether he asks me directly or not?"

The more any decision had to do with the fate of the Muslims, the greater the anxiety and stress involved. Hence when 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn 'Awf was entrusted with the task of selecting the next *khaleefah* for the Muslims, after the death of 'Umar, he did not sleep during that period, because he was so busy consulting the Muslims, even the old women.

Other types of commendable concern include: the concern of the *dai'yah* who is striving to spread Islam and convey the message, guiding others to the path of Guidance; the concern of the worshipper to ensure that his worship is correct both in intention and practice; and the concern of the Muslim for the suffering of his brothers in faith throughout the world...

Kinds of anxieties that may result from committing sin include: the distress suffered after shedding blood wrongfully; or the anxiety of a woman who is pregnant as a result of fornication or adultery.

Kinds of distress that result from wrongful treatment at the hands of others include that suffered because of mistreatment by one's own relatives, as the poet said: "The wrong suffered at the hands of those who are closely-related is more painful to bear than a blow from a powerful sword."

Distress suffered because of the calamities that happen in this world include: chronic or serious diseases, disobedience of children towards their parents, hostility on the part of one's wife or mistreatment on the part of one's husband.

Some kinds of anxiety result from fears about what may lie ahead in the future, for example a father may be worried about what will happen to his children after he dies, especially if they are weak and he has nothing to leave behind for them.

These are a few examples of different kinds of stress and worry. We will discuss the matter in further detail below:

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2. Kinds of Stress and Worry:

The distress suffered by the dai'yah when he calls his people to Islam. The Prophets had more than their fair share of this kind of stress. 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) told her nephew (the son of her sister) 'Urwah that she asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): "Did you ever suffer any day worse than the day of Uhud?" He said: "I suffered what I suffered at the hands of your people, and the worst that I suffered from them was on the day of 'Aqabah, when I had made an appeal to Ibn 'Abd Yaalayl ibn 'Abd Kalaal and he did not respond in the way I had hoped for. I left him, hardly knowing where I was going, and I did not realize where I was until I had reached Qarn al-Tha'aalib. I raised my head, and saw a cloud which was shading me. I looked in it, and saw Jibraa'eel, who called to me and said: 'Allaah has heard what your people have said to you, and their response to you. He has sent to you the Angel of the Mountains, to do whatever you tell him to do to them.' Then the Angel of the Mountains called to me, greeted me, and said, 'O Muhammad, if you wish, I will crush them between two mountains.'" The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, "Rather, I hope that Allaah will bring forth from their descendents people who will worship Allaah alone and not associate anything with Him."

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) suffered similar distress when his people disbelieved his account of his Night Journey (*Israa'*). Muslim (may Allaah have mercy on him) narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "I found myself in the Hijr (an area in the *Haram* in Makkah, near the Ka'bah), and Quryash were asking me about my Night Journey, questions about Bayt al-Maqdis that I was not sure of. I felt more distressed and anxious than I had ever felt, then Allaah raised it for me so that I could see what they were asking me about and

answer all their questions...”

Concern about acts of worship. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was very concerned about telling people about *salaat* (prayer). Abu ‘Umayr ibn Anas reported from his (paternal) uncles among the Ansaar that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was worried about how to gather the people together for prayers. Someone suggested that he set up a flag, so that people would see it and tell one another, but he did not like this idea. Another suggestion was a ram’s horn (the *shofar* of the Jews), but he did not like this idea, and said, “This belongs to the Jews.” Someone else suggested a bell, but he said, “This belongs to the Christians.” ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Zayd ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi went away, worrying about the concern of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and he was shown the *adhaan* (call to prayer) in a dream. The next morning he came to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and told him about it: “O Messenger of Allaah, whilst I was half asleep and half awake, someone came to me and showed me the *adhaan*...”

The anxiety faced by the truthful person when he is disbelieved. This happened to the great *Sahaabi* Zayd ibn al-Arqam (may Allaah be pleased with him), when he heard the chief of the *munaafiqeen* (hypocrites) saying to his colleagues: “When we return to Madeenah, the one who has pride and power will expel the one who is humiliated” (meaning that the “one who has pride and power” was himself, and the “one who is humiliated” was the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the people with him). Zayd said: “I told my (paternal) uncle, and he went and informed the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) sent for (the chief of the *munaafiqeen*, ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Ubayy), who swore that he had said no such thing. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) believed him and not me. My uncle came to me and scolded me: “All you wanted was for the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and the Muslims to hate you and disbelieve you!” I felt extreme anxiety and stress, such as no one has ever suffered. When I was on a journey with the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), I hung my head with worry. Then the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came up to me, tweaked my ear, and smiled at me. I felt happy in a way that I would not exchange immortal life in this world for that feeling. Then Abu Bakr caught up with me and asked me what the Messenger of Allaah had said to me. I said, ‘He did not say anything, but he tweaked my ear and smiled at me.’ He told me, ‘Be of good cheer!’ Then ‘Umar caught up with me and I told him what I had told Abu Bakr. The next morning, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) recited *Soorat al-Munaafiqoon* to us.”

According to a report narrated by Muslim, which tells the same story, Zayd said: “I came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and told him about it. He sent for ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Ubayy and asked him about it, but he insisted and swore that he had done no such thing, saying, ‘Zayd is telling lies to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).’ I felt very hurt because of what they said, until Allaah revealed words confirming that I had spoken the truth (interpretation of the meaning): ‘*When the*

hypocrites come to you... [al-Munaafiqoon 63:1]”

The anxiety suffered by an innocent person when false accusations are made. An example of this is what happened to ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) when the *munaafiqoon* accused her of sin during the campaign of Muraysi’. She was ill, and when she heard the news of the rumours from one of the women of her household, she became even sicker, and felt very distressed. She said: “I said, ‘Subhaan-Allaah! Are people talking about that?’ I wept all night, until morning, and never slept; my tears never stopped falling. Then I wept all day, and never slept; my tears never stopped falling. My parents came to me the next morning, after I had cried for two nights and a day, without ceasing and without sleeping. They thought that this weeping would kill me. Whilst they were sitting with me, and I was crying, a woman of the Ansaar asked permission to see me. I gave her permission, and she sat down, weeping with me. Whilst we were sitting thus, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came in, greeted us, and sat down. He had not come to visit me since the rumours had started, and for a month there had been no Revelation concerning my situation. Whilst he was sitting there, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) recited the *Shahaadah*, then he said: ‘O ‘Aa’ishah, I have heard such-and-such about you. If you are innocent, Allaah will prove your innocence, and if you did commit a sin, then ask for Allaah’s forgiveness and repent to Him, for when the slave admits his sin and repents to Allaah, Allaah will accept his repentance. When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) had finished what he had to say, my tears stopped completely, and I said to my father: ‘Respond to what the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has said.’ He said, ‘By Allaah, I do not know what I should say to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).’ I said to my mother: ‘Respond to what the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has said.’ She said, ‘By Allaah, I do not know what I should say to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).’ I said: ‘I am only a young girl and I do not know much of the Qur’aan. By Allaah, I have nothing to say to you except the words of the father of Yoosuf: “... *So (for me) patience is most fitting. And it is Allaah (Alone) Whose help can be sought against that which you assert.*” [Yoosuf 12:18].’ Then I turned away and lay down on my bed. Then Allaah revealed (interpretation of the meaning): ‘*Verily! Those who brought forth the slander (against ‘Aa’ishah) are a group among you. Consider it not a bad thing for you...*’” [al-Noor 24:11 – see complete passage, ayat 11 to 20].

Before ‘Aa’ishah’s time, Maryam bint ‘Imraan had suffered a great deal of stress and anxiety because she became pregnant without being married. Her distress reached such an extent that: “...*She said: ‘Would that I had died before this, and had been forgotten and out of sight!’*” [Maryam 19:23 – interpretation of the meaning]. She spoke thus because she knew that people would accuse her and not believe her when she came to them with a child in her arms, because she had been one of the devoted female worshippers who lived in seclusion close to the mosque, and she came from a very religious household and was descended from Prophets. Because of all this, she bore such a great burden of anxiety that she wished that she had died before this happened to her, or that she “had been forgotten and out of sight,” in other words, that she had never been created at all.

Another example is the story of the woman who was accused unjustly. ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) told her story: “A black woman who belonged to some of the Arabs became Muslim. She had a cubicle in the mosque. She used to come to us and talk with us, and when she had finished conversing with us, she told us: ‘The day of the *wishaah* (an ornamented girdle worn by women) was one of the wonders of our Lord. Indeed, it is He Who saved me from the land of *kufir* (disbelief).’” When she repeated this several times, ‘Aa’ishah asked her, “What was the day of the girdle?” She said: “A young girl who belonged to some of my people went out wearing a girdle made of leather. She dropped it, and a kite (a kind of hawk) came and swooped it up, thinking that it was a piece of meat. They accused me of taking it, and they began to punish me, to the extent that they even searched my private parts. Whilst they were surrounding me and I was in that state of distress, the kite flew back over our heads and dropped the belt. They picked it up, and I said to them: ‘This is what you accused me of, and I was innocent!’”

A man’s worry about what may happen to his wife and children after his death.

‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) reported that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to say: “One of the things that concerns me is what will happen to you [his wives] after my death, for none will be able to take care of you properly except those who are truly patient.”

Anxiety because of a loan. An example of this is what happened to al-Zubayr (may Allaah be pleased with him), whose story was told by his son ‘Abd-Allaah ibn al-Zubayr: “When al-Zubayr stood up to fight at the Battle of the Camel, he called me, so I went and stood by his side. He said: ‘O my son, no-one will be killed today except one who is a wrongdoer or one to whom wrong is done. I can see that I will die today as one to whom wrong is done. My greatest concern is my debts – do you think that any of our wealth will be left after paying off our debts? O my son, sell our property and pay off our debts.’” ‘Abd-Allaah said: “He started to advise me what to do about his debt, and told me: ‘O my son, if you are unable to pay off anything, seek the help of my *mawlaa*.’ By Allaah, I did not know what he meant until I asked, ‘O my father, who is your *mawlaa*?’ He said: ‘Allaah.’ By Allaah, every time I felt distress because of difficulty in paying off his debt, I prayed, ‘O *Mawlaa* of al-Zubayr, pay off his debt,’ and Allaah paid it off...” ‘Abd-Allaah ibn al-Zubayr said: “I calculated how much he owed, and found it to be two million and two hundred thousand... (some of al-Zubayr’s friends did not think it possible to pay off such a great debt, but Allaah greatly blessed some land belonging to al-Zubayr, and surprisingly enough, when it was divided up and sold off, there was enough to pay off the debt and have something left over) ...Al-Zubayr had four wives: one-third of his wealth was put aside for them, and each wife got one million and two hundred thousand. The total sum of his wealth was fifty million and two hundred thousand.”

Anxiety caused by dreams. This happened to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), as he said: “Whilst I was sleeping, the treasures of the earth were brought to me, and two armlets of gold were placed on my arms. That distressed me, but Allaah revealed to me that I should blow them away, so I did so, and they disappeared. I interpreted them as being the two liars whom I am facing, the one in Sana’aa’ and the one in al-Yamaamah.”

Ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him and his father) also felt distress because of a dream which he saw. He told us about it: “Some men among the Companions of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to see dreams at the time of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). They used to tell him about them, and he would say ‘*Ma sha’ Allaah.*’ I was a young boy, and I used to live in the mosque before I got married. I said to myself, ‘If you were any good, you would have seen something like these people have seen.’ When I lay down that night, I said, ‘O Allaah, if You see any good in me, then let me see a dream.’ Then two angels came to me, each of whom was holding an iron bridle in his hand. They dragged me to Hell, and I was praying, ‘O Allaah, I seek refuge with you from Hell.’ Then I dreamt that I was met by another angel, who was also holding an iron bridle in his hand. He said, ‘Do not worry, you are a good man, if only you prayed more.’ They took me to the edge of Hell, and it was shaped like a well with horns; between every two horns was an angel holding an iron bridle. I saw in it men suspended upside down from chains, and I recognized some men of Quraysh. Then they led me off towards the right. I told Hafsaah about it, and Hafsaah told the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). (According to a report narrated by Muslim: “When I woke up, I felt worried and scared about what I had seen, so I asked Hafsaah about it, and she said, ‘It is good, what you have seen.’ I said to her, ‘Ask the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about it,’ so she asked him.”) The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ‘ ‘Abd-Allaah is a righteous man, if only he prayed at night.’” Naafi’ said: “After that, he always prayed a great deal.”

Islam prescribes a number of ways to deal with the distress that results from seeing nightmares and frightening dreams.

Having described a number of kinds of distress and anxiety experienced in this world, we will now discuss ways of dealing with them.

Undoubtedly the first thing we should mention when discussing worries and anxiety is: ‘*aqeedah* (belief) and *eemaan* (faith), and the effects they have on dealing with stress. One can see many of the *kuffaar* and Muslims who are weak in faith suffering breakdowns and committing suicide in an effort to rid themselves of depression, frustration and despair when they get into trouble or when disaster strikes. Hospitals are full of patients who are suicidal or have suffered nervous breakdowns, or other kinds of psychological trauma. These problems affect many of those who are strong, let alone those who are weak. How often they lead to complete incapacity and loss of sanity!

The person who has been guided to Islam, if his ‘*aqeedah* is sound and his *eemaan* is strong, will find the cure in that which has come from Allaah, the All-Knowing and All-Aware, Who created all things and Who knows best what befits His creation. “*Should not He Who has created know? And He is the Most Kind and Courteous (to His slaves) All-Aware (of everything).*” [al-Mulk 67:14 – interpretation of the meaning].

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3. Islam's Treatment for Anxiety and Worry

Let us now discuss some of the different kinds of remedies and treatments taught by Islam:

1. Equipping oneself with *eemaan* (faith), accompanied by righteous deeds.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): *“Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he (or she) is a true believer, verily, to him We will give a good life (in this world, with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e., Paradise in the Hereafter).”* [al-Nahl 16:97]

The reason for this is clear: the believers in Allaah whose faith is correct and motivates them to do righteous deeds that reform their hearts and characters, and change their status in this world and the next, have the basic principles according to which they deal with every kind of joy and grief that they may face. They receive blessings and joys with acceptance and thanksgiving, and put them to use in beneficial ways. When they do this, they feel happy and hope that it will last and will bring them reward for their gratitude, as well as other things that will supercede the original goodness and blessings.

When faced with distress, harm, worries and anxieties, they try to resist them and reduce them as much as they can, and they react with befitting patience to the things in which they have no choice. They gain a lot of benefits as a result, such as: resilience and toughness as is appropriate; useful experience, strong willpower, patience, the hope of reward, and many other benefits which reduce the distress felt. Thus their anxiety is replaced with joy and the hope of blessings and reward from Allaah, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) stated in the saheeh hadeeth: *“How marvellous is the affair of the believer! Everything that happens to him is good, and this does not apply to anyone except the believer. If something good befalls him, he gives thanks for it, and that is good for him. If something bad befalls him, he bears it with patience, and that is good for him.”*

This is the way in which we may view calamities in a positive light. Another example is:

2. Thinking of how the Muslim may earn expiation for his sins, purify his heart and raise his status, when he is stricken with distress and worry in this life.

The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: *“Nothing of fatigue, illness, distress, worry, grief or harm befalls the Muslim, not even a prick from a thorn, but Allaah will accept it as expiation for some of his sins.”*

According to a report narrated by Muslim: *“No illness, fatigue, sickness or grief befalls the Muslim, not even worries, but it will be an expiation for some of his sins.”*

The one who is distressed or worried should know that whatever psychological pain afflicts

him is not wasted, but serves a purpose in increasing his *hasanaat* (good deeds) and expiating for his *sayi'aat* (bad deeds). The Muslim should realize that if it were not for disasters and afflictions, we would come empty-handed on the Day of Resurrection, as some of the *salaf* (early generations of Islam) pointed out, which is why they would rejoice when misfortune struck just as we rejoice at times of ease.

When a person understands how the disasters that befall him expiate for his sins, he will rejoice and be of good cheer, especially if that happens to him straight after he has committed a sin, as happened to some of the Sahaabah, may Allaah be pleased with them. 'Abd-Allaah ibn Mughaffal (may Allaah be pleased with him) reported that a man met a woman who had been a prostitute during the time of *Jaahiliyyah*. He started to joke with her, then he touched her. She told him, "Watch it! Allaah has destroyed *shirk* (once 'Affaan said: has destroyed *Jaahiliyyah*) and has brought us Islam." The man went away, and walked into a wall, cutting his face. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came along, so the man told him what had happened, and he said: "You are a slave for whom Allah wishes good. When Allaah wishes good for His slave, He hastens the punishment for his sin; when He does not wish good for His slave, he withholds the punishment until the matter is settled on the Day of Resurrection, when all of his sins will be brought forth together."

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "When Allaah wishes good for His slave, He hastens to bring about his punishment in this world, and if He does not wish good for him, He withholds the punishment until he is dealt with for his sin on the Day of Resurrection."

3. Understanding the reality of this world

The believer knows that this world is only temporary, that its luxuries are few, and that whatever pleasures exist here are always imperfect. If it causes a little laughter, it gives many reasons to weep; if it gives a little, it withholds far more. The believer is only detained here, as the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "This world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the kaafir."

This world is also fatigue, pain, misery and suffering, so the believer feels relief when he departs from it. Abu Qutaadah ibn Rib'i al-Ansaari used to say that a funeral passed the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and he said: "He is now relieved, and people feel relieved of him." The people asked, "O Messenger of Allaah, how can he be relieved and people feel relieved of him?" He said, "The believing slave (who dies) is relieved of the fatigue and pain of this world and has gone to the mercy of Allaah; when the rebellious slave dies, people, land, trees and animals are relieved of him."

For the believer, death brings a respite from the distress, worries and pain of this life, as is stated in the hadeeth: "When the believer is about to die, the angels of mercy bring white silk and say, 'Come out content, with the pleasure of Allaah upon you, to the mercy of Allaah and sweet fragrance and a Lord who is not angry.' So (the soul) comes out like the

best fragrance of musk and the angels hand it to one another until they bring it to the gate of heaven. They say, ‘How good is this fragrance that has come from the earth.’ They bring it to the souls of the believers, and they rejoice over it much more than you do when one who has been absent returns. They ask him, ‘What did So-and-so do? What did So-and-so do?’ then (the angels) say, ‘Leave him alone, for he was suffering the distress of the world.’ When he asks, ‘Did not So-and-so come to you?’ they say: ‘He was taken to his home in the Pit (i.e., Hell).’ When the kaafir is about to die, angels of punishment bring sackcloth and say, ‘Come out discontent, with the wrath of Allaah upon you, to the punishment of Allaah.’ So (the soul) comes out like the worst stench of rotten meat, and they take it to the gate of the earth. They say, ‘How foul is this stench,’ until they bring it to the souls of the kuffaar.”

This understanding of the reality of this world makes it easier for the believer to bear afflictions, pains, distress and anxiety, because he knows that they are an inevitable part of the nature of this life.

4. Following the examples of the Prophets and the righteous

The Prophets and the righteous suffered more distress in this world than other people. Each person is tested according to the strength of his faith. If Allaah loves a person, He tests him. Sa’d (may Allaah be pleased with him) asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): “O Messenger of Allaah, which of the people suffers the most distress?” He said: “The Prophets, then those who come after them (in terms of status), then those who come after them. A man will be tested according to the strength of his faith. If his faith is strong, then the distress with which he is tried will be greater; if his faith is weak, he will be tested in accordance with the level of his faith. Distress will keep on befalling the slave until he walks on the face of the earth free from sin.”

5. Making the Hereafter one’s main concern

The concerns of this world overwhelm and confuse people, but if the slave makes the Hereafter his main concern, Allaah will help him to focus and be determined, as was narrated by Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him): “The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ‘Whoever has the Hereafter as his main concern, Allaah will fill his heart with a feeling of richness and independence; he will be focused and feel content, and this world will come to him in spite of it. Whoever has this world as his main concern, Allaah will cause him to feel constant fear of poverty; he will be distracted and unfocused, and he will have nothing of this world except what was already predestined for him.’”

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “When a person spends his entire day with no other concern but Allaah alone, Allaah, may He be glorified, will take care of all his needs and take care of all that is worrying him; He will empty his heart so that it will be filled only with love for Him, free his tongue so that it will speak only in remembrance of Him (*dhikr*) and cause all his faculties to work only in obedience to Him. But if a person spends his entire day with no other concern but this world, Allaah will make him bear its