

Hardship, difficulties, trials, tribulations or calamities - whatever you may call them, the truth is we cannot run away from them. There are some people reading this who are going through calamities right now whilst others may have just come out of a calamity. For some of us, things may be going great but the sad truth is a calamity might just be round the corner waiting to hit. Whatever situation you are in, understand that calamities are inevitable so we need to know how to deal with them in a way which pleases Allah. In doing so, when we do eventually come out of these calamities, even though we may have had much to lose, we would have gained Allah's pleasure which is priceless.

What is a calamity?

Generally, a calamity is a loss of something in this world or the risk of losing it. It could be a damage to our health or mental state, our finances, marital issues, death of a loved one or just a setback such as a failure in achieving a personal target. Calamities are a very personal experience and for some, especially men, they don't like to talk about them which can make dealing with these challenges even more difficult.

We all have different levels of tolerance towards calamities - something that may totally destroy one person's life may just feel like a minor calamity for someone else. Even more interestingly, someone's calamity can be another person's blessing! For example, we may need to take a cold shower due to heating problems - although very minor, some may regard this as a small calamity. For people who live in places where water itself is limited, they would be grateful to have clean water in the first place regardless of it being hot or cold, it would be a huge blessing for them.

Calamities often hit us when we least expect it, when things are going so great it's almost too good to be true. The sudden shock can break us down emotionally and it is absolutely fine as that is just human to do so. One moment we are at ease, happy, content or excited and then within minutes or even seconds we are upset, angry, stressed or fearful. Situations and emotions are constantly changing and we need to acknowledge that this is part of life.

So we have established calamities of various forms are inevitable and we will all face them, but the question remains - how do we deal with them? Here are some practical steps a believer can take during calamities to please Allah.

Have Patience

Firstly, it is important to remain calm, patient and collected at the point where the calamity

has just fallen upon you or you have just heard of the news. From a psychological perspective this helps a lot as it is proven that humans have a rational side and an emotional side - the rational part works on information and logic whereas the emotional side is responsible for feelings and desires. When a calamity strikes us, we often make the mistake of becoming overly emotional and making erratic decisions which we later regret. It is crucial to stay calm and think through what is happening rationally and to understand the bigger picture and grand scheme of things.

This piece of wisdom comes directly from the teachings of our beloved prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as it was narrated in Bukhari that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“The real patience is at the first stroke of a calamity.”

A believer should have patience and think in the long-term about the blessings of Allah and have faith in the Creator.

Something which also helps is to understand that emotions are temporary and over time things will definitely ease, as they always do. For example, at that very moment when you lose something, it feels like the end of the world, however, over time, the memory and emotions attached to that item will fade away. It is a blessing from Allah that he allows man to forget with time.

Is this calamity a result of my sin?

During calamities, often we look for things to blame so we can relieve the stress from ourselves. We may say to ourselves “It wasn’t my fault, it was so and so or external factors that led to this etc.” Rather than looking for others to blame, a strong believer should hold themselves accountable first. They should ask themselves whether this calamity is a result of their own sins. Has this calamity occurred because Allah wishes well for them? Is Allah directing them to something better or is Allah trying to make them turn towards him? Whatever the answer is, the reality is that some calamities can be a blessing in disguise, as Ibn Taymiyyah said:

“A calamity that makes you turn to Allah is better for you than a blessing which makes you forget the remembrance of Allah.”

It sounds unusual that a calamity can be better for us than a blessing, but we have probably all experienced a blessing which can in fact be a calamity in disguise. An example is that of

someone getting promoted to a very senior position with an amazing salary package - to the world it may seem like an amazing blessing. However, if that job and increased workload stops them from worshipping Allah and takes them away from their religion then surely it is a calamity.

Turn back to Allah by making sincere Du'a

Something else that we do during calamities is that we panic and complain to people around us. We look for quick solutions and explore various strategies to get out of the calamity. Only when all of these options have been exhausted, as a last resort we then turn to Allah out of desperation to help us. This approach is totally wrong.

We should in fact be turning to Allah and Allah alone first before we explore the options that are out there. How often do people on their deathbeds plead to doctors, people in debt desperately beg banks or relatives for funds or unemployed people constantly chase recruiters for vacancies. We do these things instinctively and it is important to take the necessary actions, however the first thing to do is to turn back to Allah.

Think about it deeply. The calamities we face in this Dunya, which is the creation of Allah, surely we should turn to Allah first for help? Do we really think a human being, with limited ability, can solve our problems rather than Allah, the Creator of all creation? We need to prioritise our options. Nothing is impossible for Allah, all we need to do is simply turn to him and just ask. Ask him and leave it to him and then continue exploring the various options out there - at the very least we will have the reassurance that we have requested the Creator for help before we seek the help from the creation.

To understand that calamities can be a sign for us to turn back to Allah and get closer to Allah can give the believer endless comfort.

Narrated in Tirmidhi, the Prophet (pbuh) said:

“Remember Allah during times of ease and He will remember you during times of difficulty.”

Calamities can lead us to turn back to Allah. Let's be honest, many of us have more focus in our Salah during times of trials and tribulation than during times of happiness and ease. The reality is that we should be turning to Allah with gratefulness during moments of ease, as we do during moments of calamities. Narrated in Muslim, the Prophet(pbuh) said:

“How wonderful is the affair of the believer, for his affairs are all good, and this applies to no one but the believer. If something good happens to him, he is thankful for it and that is good for him. If something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience and that is good for him.”

Seek forgiveness

Enduring calamities with patience is a means of expiating sins as the Prophet (pbuh) said:

“The believer is not harmed by a thorn or anything greater, but Allah will raise him in status thereby, or erase a sin thereby.”

If it is indeed a punishment, then it is a blessing from Allah that he punishes us in this short life rather than punish us in the hereafter. For this reason, it is important we put extra focus on asking Allah for forgiveness during calamities.

We should reflect in detail on our actions and be critical about our own self. Asking for forgiveness is not just a process of saying “Asthaghfirullah” but it is a deep, meaningful process in which we turn to Allah sincerely for forgiveness. Three simple steps of Tawbah are as follows: Firstly, acknowledge the fact that you have sinned, then sincerely regret the action and finally take active steps to abandon the sin.

In the Qur’an [11:114], Allah tells us:

“Indeed, good deeds erase bad deeds”

So during calamities, it would definitely make sense for a believer to increase their good deeds as a means of repentance. A believer can increase their charity, prayer, voluntary fasting, even rekindling relationships with distant family members or just smiling more often. To not just actively do good deeds but increase them during periods of calamity is an action which can comfort the believer and make them feel stronger both mentally and emotionally.

Reflect on the benefits of a calamity

Reflecting on how short our life is in comparison to the eternal nature of Akhirah can give huge comfort to the believer during calamities. True happiness is attained in the Akhirah and not in the Dunya. Of course we should all aim to be happy and successful in this Dunya, however our number one goal in this Dunya should be to worship Allah, please him and

work on getting closer to him at all times.

Many of us have tons of blessings which people around the world are literally dying for. Just think about the people who freeze to death in lorries or drown in the sea in search for a better life - what makes people take such huge risks? Many of our brothers and sisters around the world are going through far greater calamities than us and yet they still have faith in Allah. Why are we so ungrateful and why do we give up so easily when things go wrong?

“So verily after hardship comes ease, verily after hardship comes ease” Qur’an [94:5]

The repetition in this verse of the Qur’an emphasises the significance that ease is coming. The word **صَعَابَةٌ** (hardship) is in the definite form (it has ‘Al’ in front of the word) but the word **يُسْرًا** (ease) is in the indefinite form which means that a person may have one problem, but Allah will give us many eases, possibly of different forms. The hardship mentioned in the first part is the same as the one mentioned in the second part, but the ease mentioned in the first part is not the same as the one mentioned in the second part. This tells us, Allah can close one door for us but he will open many other doors.

Allah alone is sufficient for us and He is the Best Disposer of affairs

Narrated in Al-Bukhari, Ibn ‘Abbas (May Allah be pleased with them) said: When Ibraheem (pbuh) was thrown into the fire, he said: “Allah (Alone) is sufficient for us, and, He is the Best Disposer of affairs.” So did the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (pbuh) when he was told: “A great army of the pagans had gathered against him, so fear them”. But this (warning) only increased him and the Muslims in Faith and they said: “Allah (Alone) is sufficient for us, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs (for us)”

Hasbunallahu Wa Ni’mal Wakeel, meaning Allah alone is sufficient for us and He is the Best Disposer of affairs. This beautiful ayah from the Qur’an is a du’a we should use to seek help from Allah constantly. Reciting it sincerely knowing the meaning at all times, not just during calamities, really helps to shape the believer’s mind-set.

We can lose a job, business, family member, spouse, our homes, whatever it is in the Dunya that we lose, as long as we have Allah and Allah alone, then that suffices. It is enough for us

that we have Allah and we do not need anything else. Whatever it is at stake to lose in this Dunya would not compare to the reward gained in the Akhira - in fact, the calamity in the Dunya would be a very little price to pay.

Islam itself is something that we should be ever grateful for. Alhamdulillah we can still pray and turn to Allah and Allah alone with faith. Losing anything else is temporary, however having a connection with Allah and building it through Ibadah is what builds our final abode in the Akhira, which is Jannah inshaAllah. May Allah grant us all Jannah. May Allah give ease to all those who are suffering calamities around the world.