

# Struggle, Suffering and Death: The Story of Life

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You may have seen it, lived it and hated it. Or you may have disbelieved in it, ridiculed it and accepted convenient explanations for it.

What I am talking about are non-random patterns in the course of life. Even if there was nothing else to prove it (and there is much else to prove it), I would believe in God because of the patterns of occurrences in my life. The pattern of things going wrong, of circumstances, of people, place and time that just never properly align no matter what I do. The pattern is so clearly non-random, so clearly beyond my control to change, that it speaks of a higher power. What highlights this is the fact that for some, life is the opposite; everything works out with or without merit.

Fortunate people think that their skills and attitude explain their success. They tend to want to eliminate the role of powers beyond themselves in how their life has worked out. Unfortunate people very readily understand and clearly see that where they end up and how things work out for them often has little to do with their efforts or skills. What is the truth?

## How Are We Tested

*And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient*  
(2:155)

*Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such (trial) has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you? They were touched by poverty and hardship and were shaken until (even their) messenger and those who believed with him said, "When is the help of Allah?"*  
*Unquestionably, the help of Allah is near.*  
(2:214)

*You will surely be tested in your possessions and in yourselves. And you will surely hear from those who were given the Scripture before you and from those who associate others with Allah much abuse. But if you are patient and fear Allah - indeed, that is of the matters (worthy) of determination.*  
(3:186)

*And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees (of rank) that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful.*  
(6:165)

*Your wealth and your children are but a trial, and Allah has with Him a great reward.*  
(64:15)

We are told by Allah that life is a test, and the means by which we are tested include: -

- Wealth/possessions in terms of gain and loss
- Status/success in terms of gain and loss
- Other people/children
- Falsehood and verbal abuse
- General difficulties/hardships
- Hunger
- Fear
- Death of those you care about
- Yourself (physically and mentally)

Other specifics and examples of things that tempt us are mentioned in the Qur'an also. And we must bear with them all with patience and determination.

## Why the Test?

*And We will surely test you until We make evident those who strive among you (for the cause of Allah) and the patient, and We will test your affairs.*

(47:31)

Quite simply, it is to make evident though our actions and beliefs those among us that actually believe in the message of Allah and those that do not. There is something quite important here, something which many may miss. The following section expands on what this is.

## Is it Always a Test?

Yes! If your life appears to be easy, if you find that in your life, many or all the pieces are falling into place like you want them... ***Then realise you are failing the test.*** The very nature of this world is that it **must** be difficult (as a Muslim) and so if you do not find it difficult, then you have been deceived.

*O mankind, fear your Lord and fear a Day when no father will avail his son, nor will a son avail his father at all. Indeed, the promise of Allah is truth, so let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allah by the Deceiver.*

(31:33)

*Know that the life of this world is but **amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting** to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of rain whose (resulting) plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes (scattered) debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.*

(57:20)

Assess your life, your actions and your course. It is nothing but the deception of the deceiver (Satan) that makes life appear pleasant and easy. This is a major trial of the successful.

*Do not regard with envy the worldly benefits We have given some of them, for with these We seek only to test them. The provision of your Lord is better and more lasting.*

(20:131)

*O mankind, indeed the promise of Allah is truth, so let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allah by the Deceiver.*

(35:5)

## **Why Life is a Guaranteed Test for Those on the Straight Path**

As an expansion on one of the trials mentioned in the first section (other people), I present the clear evidence that the majority of people will be a big trial in your life.

*The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts (Shepherd) at what hears nothing but calls and cries (cattle or sheep) - deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.*

(2:171)

*And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts (minds) with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.*

(7:179)

*And most of them follow not except assumption. Indeed, assumption avails not against the truth at all. Indeed, Allah is Knowing of what they do.*

(10:36)

*Most of the people are not going to believe despite your strong desire for it. And you do not demand from them any reward against it. It is nothing but a reminder for all the (people of the) worlds. How many a sign there is in the heavens and the Earth, which they pass by and they are heedless to them; And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating partners with Him in His divinity.*

(12:103-106)

*Alif, Lam, Meem, Ra. These are the verses of the Book; and what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, but most of the people do not believe.*

(13:1)

*And We have certainly diversified for the people in this Qur'an from every [kind] of example,  
but most of the people refused [anything] except disbelief.  
(17:89)*

*Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers.  
(26:8,67,103,121,139,158,174, 190)*

*And thus We have placed within every city the greatest of its criminals to conspire therein.  
But they conspire not except against themselves, and they perceive [it] not.  
And when a sign comes to them, they say, "Never will we believe until we are given like that  
which was given to the messengers of Allah." Allah is most knowing of where He places His  
message. There will afflict those who committed crimes debasement before Allah and severe  
punishment for what they used to conspire.  
(6:123,124)*

*Rather, they say, "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are in their footsteps  
[rightly] guided."  
And similarly, We did not send before you any warner into a city except that its affluent said,  
"Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are following in their footsteps."  
(43:21-23)*

As these and other verses make clear, the majority of humanity willingly reject the truth or willingly shut their minds to it through hedonism and/or malice. This means that in the path of Allah you are likely to be going against the common flow of humanity. Like cattle, the majority of humanity is led by those with malicious intent, because they will not think. Others wander blindly, worshipping their incidental desires.

In such a world, speaking the truth and standing for it puts a target on you by the leaders of evil because the truth exposes them, and by the herds because they hate to acknowledge that they have been duped and because their hedonism hates limitations. It is for this reason that Allah makes standing for and enjoying the truth an absolute requirement if you seek to pass the test, if you seek to save yourself from loss.

*(Allah swears) By time (and its passage),  
Indeed, mankind is in loss,  
Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to  
truth and advised each other to patience.  
(103:1-3)*

There is no escape from trial in this world.

## **Illogical Reactions to the Trials of Life**

*And among people is he who worships Allah on an edge; if any good befalls him, he is satisfied; but if a trial afflicts him, he utterly turns away. He will incur the loss of this world and the Hereafter. That indeed is a clear loss.*

(22:11)

This kind of person reacts emotionally, irrationally and without wisdom. This kind of a reaction is that of a person who has not submitted to the will of Allah and who lacks patience.

*Among people there are some who say: "We believe in Allah." But when such a person is made to endure suffering in Allah's cause, he reckons the persecution he suffers at the hands of people as though it is a chastisement from Allah. But if victory comes from your Lord, the same person will say "We were with you." Doesn't Allah know whatever is in the minds (lit. Chests) of the people of the world?*

(29:10)

This kind of person equates difficulty and the evil acts of people with punishment from Allah which affects their acts and beliefs, and may make them even think they are doing something wrong (while trying to struggle in the way of Allah) and potentially think of doing something else. However if they find it easy or smooth to work in the way of Allah they are confident and have no problem in championing the cause.

*When affliction befalls man, he appeals to Us; but when We bestow a favour upon him he says, 'All this has been given to me because of my own knowledge.' By no means! It is a trial: yet most of them do not realize it.*

(39:49)

This kind of person sees the bad that happens to him/her as a trial from Allah and so asks for help, but when things are going well they forget Allah and just think that it is their own knowledge and skills that produced the good they have. Wrong! Both the good and the bad are the trials!

## **When Facing your Trials, Remember...**

*No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register before We bring it into being - indeed that, for Allah, is easy.*

(57:22)

It always helps to know that all affairs lie with Allah and that nothing happens except by the knowledge and will of Allah. With this knowledge you can better submit yourself to Allah and with patience accept the trials that befall you.

*Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah , the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfil their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous.*

(2:177)

Trials in life are obstacles on the path of righteousness and they come in every variety you can imagine and more. Regardless of what we face, the number one priority is to be righteous, to follow the straight path of Allah. In so doing, we can have comfort in the promise and mercy of Allah, and we will have nothing to fear.

*Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds and establish prayer and give zakah will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.*

(2:277)