

Allah Loves Those Who Strive September 25, 2025

**Alem najAAal lahu AAaynayni, Wa lisanen wa safateyn, Wahadaynahunnajdayni
Fala iqtaḥama alAAaqabata Wamaḥ adraka maḥ alAAaqabatu Fakku raqabatin
(Surah al-Balad 90:10-13)**

Have we not given him two eyes, and a tongue and a pair of lips, And shown him the two highways? But he hath made no attempt on the path that is steep. And what will explain to thee the path that is steep? (It is:) to free a slave

In Surah al-Balad, The City, Allah-u Ta'ala mentions two paths that we may have to choose in this life, an easy path and a steep, difficult one. Each time we strive to solve one of our problems, we are faced with a choice between these two paths. In making the decision about which path to take, He warns us not to be tempted by apparent comfort and ease of the first path which is descending, but advises us to take the steep one, the difficult one, the ascending one. It is the steep path that brings us closer to Allah-Ta'ala, and helps us to become better human beings, better servants of Allah. It is the path to salvation.

Which path is the steep path? In the verse, the steep and difficult path is described as the path of freeing a slave. But how are we going to find a slave and free one? Who are the slaves at this time, in this century? We really do not have to look far away to find a slave. The slave is in us. The slave is our selves, our ego. It is the one who is attached to the comfort of this world and does not like to strive. It is the slave of this world. The steep path, the difficult path, the path to salvation, is freeing our ego from the slavery of this world. That is called mujahade, striving.

We live in a time where we cannot afford to live the life of a slave. No matter who we are or what we do, we must excel and use our potential to its fullest capacity and we must break the shackles of slavery. When the world around us arrogantly looks down upon us with its wealth and power, tyrannizing us as if piling mountains upon us, and pulling us under the ocean waves, we must have the power, the knowledge, and the capacity to stand against wrongdoings, tyranny and rise above the waves and mountains they cast upon us. Freedom is not free; it demands continuous striving.

We need to hold on to the transforming power of our religion. The Arabian peninsula, once characterized by savage traditions, including the live burial of female infants, widespread drunkenness, gambling, and limited options for women other than prostitution, was transformed within two decades following the arrival of the Prophet Muhammad (saws) and the religion of Islam. This shift in culture was profound:

murderers, drunkards, gamblers, and thieves became saints, scholars, and educators. The power of Islam propelled that society centuries ahead of its contemporaries. All these facts should lead us to question our lives and habits. Has Islam also transformed us as it has transformed Arabian society?

Allah-u Ta'ala says, "Those who strive for us we will certainly guide them in Our ways; God is with the doers of good." (Surah Ankabut 29:69) Hence the guidance comes with mujahada, striving. The more we resist the temptations of lower self, the more guidance we are promised to receive. Mujahada striving requires that we close the door of ease and open the door of difficulty; we close the door of comfort and laziness, and open the door of effort. We close the door of sleep and heedlessness and open the door of wakefulness; we close the door of arrogance, and open the door of humbleness; we close the door of imagination and open the door of reality.

We need to retrieve what we have lost many years ago. This can only be achieved by working hard, and choosing the steep path. We must wake up and strive for Allah's sake, In Surah Najm (53:39), He said: "Man can have nothing but what he strives for". The verse is clear. We will not achieve anything by wishful thinking, relying on others without exerting any effort. But there is hope. It is never too late to strive for Allah's sake because He promises to guide those who strive for His cause.

We must always do our best with the capacity we have, regardless of who we are, where we are, or what we are capable of. We cannot afford to sit and listen to the whispers of the Shaytan, who tries to convince us that we don't have a chance. We must take the shot. We may or may not succeed right away, but we absolutely will not give up. Remember: we miss all the shots we don't take. Allah's promise is clear for those who strive.

Our ego does not like to put forth extra effort, but rather it likes comfort. It likes to see immediate results, with little or no effort, and lacks patience. It likes to get promoted, but does not like to exert itself. It wants to be rich, but it does not like to work. It wishes to be loved, but does not like to sacrifice for the beloved. It seeks immediate enjoyment and pleasure, but does not like to defer enjoyment for greater elevated results. The ego tells us to indulge now rather than abstain for a greater future, dismissing the disciplined life as too painful. Spending life in fun and games is the easy path, but exerting our will for harder work, better education, and finer qualities are difficult paths. The steep path brings us closer to Allah-Ta'ala. The steep path leads to salvation. There is no other way to realize the purpose of our creation.

Rasulallah (saws) said: "I take refuge in God from the curse of laziness". Laziness in all its aspects is to be abhorred. It is a sin. Rasulallah (saws) also said: "The one who masters a craft and abandons it is not one of us." This means if you have already gained proficiency, expertise and knowledge in any beneficial skill, profession or art, if you have already invested time and effort to become competent,

abandoning your skills suggests losing your skills through laziness. This is wasting a valuable personal asset that Allah has bestowed upon you. Rasulallah (saws) expresses severe disapproval of those who abandon their skills. The Islamic tradition that propelled us 500 years in front of everyone else strongly encourages hardwork, excellence (ihsan), productivity, and benefit to society.

This world and what it offers is not bad. On the contrary, it is the field of the hereafter. What we plant here, we will reap in the hereafter. Therefore the goods and beauties of this world are not harmful in themselves, but they become destructive when we allow them to make us disobedient, forgetful and unconscious of our Lord, forgetting that He is the one who generously offered all these beauties to us. The real problem lies in our relationship with the world, our misplaced preference for it over the One who gave it to us. It is wrong when the world causes us to break our connection with the Divine, especially since everything beautiful exists precisely to remind us of and strengthen our bond with the Lord.

Yurdaer Al Latif Al Jerrahi