

## Is My Suffering Due to Allah's Mercy or His Wrath? December 12, 2025

**aḥasiba n-nāsu ay yut` rakū ay yaqūlū āmannā wahum lā yuf`tanūn (Surah al-Ankabut 29:2)- Sada**

Do men think that they will be left alone in saying, "We believe," and that they will not be tested?

Our journey in this life will not be free of tests and trials. These trials are not random incidents, but they are a necessary part of our spiritual journey as believers. They are carefully and deliberately designed by the Almighty to refine our character and prepare us to attain our best version that Allah knows we are capable of being, and to receive the profound blessings that follow. Yet, we often wonder why some seem to face challenges of one hardship after another while others live in relative ease. Occasionally, when we face a test, we fail to understand if the trial is a manifestation of His Mercy or His Wrath. We feel lost in darkness, crying out "Why me? Why now?"

In this journey we call life, we face two types of darkness. The first is literal darkness, defined by the absence of physical light. Without illumination, objects become invisible; we stumble, we have accidents. We learn this reality quickly. No one attempts to drive a car with their eyes closed. No one willingly walks through the night without a flashlight. But when we ignore this reality, the sudden impact of hitting an obstacle quickly reminds us what we are meant to see and to avoid.

There is another kind of darkness which is pervasive, and it is not as easy to detect as the darkness of night. This second, more insidious kind of darkness is spiritual darkness. It is not the inability to see objects in the daylight; rather, it is the inability to perceive the profound meaning behind them, and the associated events, even when they stand fully visible. Our physical eyes allow us to absorb the light reflected *from* objects, yet they are entirely incapable of seeing the deeper significance of events around us.

Spiritual darkness causes us to make mistakes. Just as we lose direction when we travel in darkness, we also lose direction and are separated from sirat al-mustaqim when we are left in spiritual darkness. In such darkness, meaning vanishes, purpose dissolves, and shame disappears. In such darkness, the light of intelligence is replaced by the shadow of arrogance, and the light of haya, our inner compass, is replaced by blind ambition. The light of compassion is exchanged with hatred. This insensitivity leads us to lose all sense of shame, and to disregard the fact that Allāh Ta'ālā sees and knows our displeasing actions, whether they are committed publicly or privately.

When we are in darkness of any type, we need to wake up so that we do not hit a wall, or do something that we will feel ashamed of in front of our Lord. Only someone who cares for us, who loves us, wakes us up from the sleep of heedlessness.

Allah-u Ta'ala told us that He will test us, but often these tests are not to punish, but administered as a wake up call and opportunity to receive forgiveness from sins. Therefore, whenever adversity befalls us, it befits a faithful one to engage in profound self-inspection. We should use this adversity as an opportunity to become a better servant by cleansing our actions and our tongues.

What seems to be a difficult trial or a punishment often is an opportunity for us to bring meaning and spiritual light in our lives. In a hadith, Rasulallah (saws) says:

"When Allah wants good for his servant, He hastens his punishment in the world." When we sin, and see the consequence of it immediately, we should recognize this as a mercy and be thankful. Consider a dishonest person who devours the wealth of others, and subsequently loses their business in a financial disaster. What appears to be a disaster, in reality, is a manifestation of His Mercy, and instantly prevents the continuation of the sin. This consequence becomes a form of redemption, and a wake-up call for past transgressions. Allah-u Ta'ala does not punish us twice. If you receive your punishment here, then you will not be punished in the hereafter.

Similarly, imagine falling ill on the very morning you planned to commit a grave transgression; your sickness becomes a blessing by preventing a deliberate transgression. More importantly, if we recognize our sins, feel remorse, and repent, then our spiritual darkness is eliminated and our spiritual station is raised. Perhaps, the worst that could happen to anyone is not facing any consequences and getting away with the sin. Without any observable consequences, people would continue committing the sin without any repentance.

In the same Hadith, Rasulallah (saws) says: "And when He wants bad for His servant, He withholds his sins from him until he appears before Him on the Day of Judgment." And in this tradition, Rasulallah said: "Indeed greater reward comes with greater trial. And indeed, when Allah loves a people He subjects them to trials, so whoever is content, then for him is pleasure, and whoever is discontent, then for him is wrath."

Thus, facing the consequences of our mistakes quickly, before we can repeat them over and over again, is actually a profound sign of Allāh's love and desire for our ultimate good. Conversely, when we commit sins and encounter no immediate consequences, it is a grave sign of His displeasure, and the delay of our reckoning until the Hereafter. The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) taught us that "the greater reward comes with the greater trial," showing that the depth of our testing corresponds to the magnitude of our potential reward.

Returning to the initial question of whether a trial manifests as Allāh's Mercy or His Punishment, the true nature of our trials is determined entirely by our response. The choice is ours to make: when we meet trials with contentment and humility, using them to attain better

versions of ourselves, the trial transforms into a blessing. If we face them with anger and arrogance, judging the mercy of Allah, we incur punishment by being left alone in the darkness of this life. As for *why* Allāh tests those He loves, the purpose is clear and twofold: He subjects them to trials either to guide them back to the Straight Path (*Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*) or, for those already steadfast, to elevate them to a higher spiritual degree.

**Yurdaer Al Latif Al Jerrahi**