

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يَضِلَّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا
أَمَّا بَعْدُ

فَإِنَّ أَصْدَقَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى وَخَيْرَ الْهُدَى هُدَى مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَشَرَّ الْأُمُورِ مُحَدَّثَاتُهَا وَكُلُّ مُحَدَّثَةٍ بِدْعَةٌ وَكُلُّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ وَكُلُّ ضَلَالَةٍ فِي النَّارِ

Dear all brothers,

All thanks and praise is due to Allah Ta'ala, we seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge to Allah from the evil within ourselves and the consequences of our evil deeds. Whosoever Allah guides will never be led astray, and whosoever Allah leads astray will never find guidance. We bear witness that there is no God to be worshipped except Allah, alone without any partners, and we bear witness that Muhammad shallallahu'alaihi wa sallam is His servant and His Messenger.

As a reminder for myself and all of us, let us increase our taqwa to Allah Subhaanahu wa Ta'ala by fulfilling all of His commands and refraining from all His prohibitions. Let's continue to be guided by the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Shallallahu'alaihi wa sallam in our daily life.

Today I'd like to talk about how to deal with suffering, especially whenever we discuss natural disasters, wars, oppressions, or personal grief with our friends or neighbours outside the Muslim community. Even in Japan, when we basically feel safe, sometimes we also suffer from some problems such as sickness, bad relationship with other people, etc.

It's the "problem", as we might see it, of Suffering. The issue here is that some people then often argue, that if God is Full of Love, if Allah is All Merciful, why do people suffer?

This question leads to further questions such as:

Why are there so many earthquakes, floods, volcano eruptions?

Why is there so much warfare, hunger and disease?

Why do innocent men, women and children have to endure unspeakable hardship?

Why do the real sinners seem to get away with their crimes?

Sometimes we hear people say, "How can I believe in a Merciful and Loving God when He allows so much suffering?"

These people take the existence of suffering as proof that God doesn't exist, or if He does exist, then He doesn't deserve to be worshipped, because He appears to be so unjustified.

Wa 'iyadu billah! How do we deal with such arguments?

First of all, we must make clear that every human being, without exception, will at some time or other have to endure hardship, pain, and death.

Allah says several times in the Quran, “Kullu nafsin dzaa iqatul mauut”, every soul will taste the Death. In Al-Baqarah: 214, Allah also Says,

“Do you think that you will enter Heaven without being tested like those who were tested before you? They endured suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit that even the Prophet and those of faith who were with him cried: ‘When will the help of Allah come?’ Truly, Allah’s help is always near!”

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ۗ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ
وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصُرُ اللَّهُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ

“Ala! Inna nasrullaahi qariib!”

Allah’s help is always near! It’s much nearer than we think! Allah wants us to really feel and experience our desperate need for Him. He wants us to persevere, patiently. He wants us to put our complete trust in His mercy, so that we can set ourselves apart from those who disbelieve, those who stand against faith. So actually, how blessed we are as muslims, who believe in the Lord of all the worlds, and who have absolute certainty of our Day of meeting with Him! Oppositely, how miserable and lonely, how pointless the life of those without faith, who live from day to day, without any hope and without longing for what lies beyond death!

In the beginning of Surah Al-Mulk, Allah explained about Himself:

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ
لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفُورُ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا ۗ
مَا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَفَؤُوتٍ ۗ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ فُطُورٍ ﴿٣﴾

“Blessed is He in Whose Hand is the Dominion; and He over all things has Power! He Who created death and life so that He may TEST which of you is best in deed, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Oft-forgiving!”

Here is the key to what some people see as the “problem” of suffering. We know that suffering is a test for us, a test of our patience. We know that peace and prosperity is also a test, a test of our gratitude to Allah. Those who see suffering as a “problem” are really saying that they believe they have a right to a life of uninterrupted happiness, with no discomfort, no pain and no grief. But that’s not what this earthly life is all about! That’s what Allah promises us in akhirat, the hereafter, not in dunya! We’re not there yet! We still have to earn the right to enter Allah’s garden!

Dear my beloved brothers,

So now we understand that anything that we consider as a hardship is actually a test for us. And if we have hardship, Allah has also explained how deal with it. Allah says in Surah Al-Baqarah: 155-156

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ
الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

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, (155) Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."

So here, the believers are said to accept the Divine Decree. Allah does what He Wills, and His will is always, unfailingly good, however harsh it may appear to us on the surface. Our human perception is limited. Like ants crawling over a carpet, we complain about the rough surface, the knots and the texture that make our journey difficult. But we cannot see the beauty of the carpet from above. We cannot see the beauty of Allah's master plan, until we step outside our small, selfish worlds. Believers suffer, but they know their suffering is an expiation of their sins, and their patience and contentment brings them closer to Allah.

What about the non-believers? The non-believers actually suffer at a much deeper level. "First there's the pain and suffering itself. Then there's the belief that it shouldn't have happened at all. They suffer because something is wrong, then they suffer again because, now everything is wrong. Their lack of faith then just leads them to endless despair.

Let us thank Allah for illuminating our hearts with the light of His guidance. Even if our faith, our iman is as small as a mustard seed. If we truly believe in Allah and we learn to rely on Him completely, then we are much richer and more blessed than the wealthiest non-Believers, whose wealth and happiness stand on shaky foundations.

بَارَكَ اللَّهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ .
وَتَقَبَّلَ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ . أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلَكُمْ

Second sermon

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، وَبِهِ نَسْتَعِينُ عَلَى أُمُورِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ،
وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى نَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ، أَمَّا بَعْدُ

Dear my brothers,

One poet says that “Suffering is a gift. In it is a hidden mercy.” Suffering teaches us patience, sabr, and it also teaches us a total reliance on Allah, and serene acceptance of whatever He has decreed. It teaches us to persevere, to work hard to seek Allah’s good pleasure. It teaches us humility, it teaches compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad Shalallaahu'alaihi wa Sallam said,

عجبا لأمر المؤمن إن أمره كله له خير

“How fortunate is the Believer, all of his affairs are good for him.”

A believer can endure hardship, but it is good for him because it teaches patience.

He then enjoys relief from hardship, and it is good for him. It gives a chance to be grateful to Allah. Indeed, the true Friends of Allah are always overflowing with gratitude, in good times and in hard times. So dear brothers, let us be truly grateful to Allah, that we have this wonderful gift of Iman, this gift of Faith, to illuminate our way through life’s challenges.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا
اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ الْأَحْيَاءِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْأَمْوَاتِ إِنَّكَ سَمِيعٌ قَرِيبٌ
مُجِيبُ الدَّعَوَاتِ

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ
رَحِيمٌ

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ
رَبَّنَا لَا تُرِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا
تَحْمِلْنَا مَالًا طَاقَةً لَنَا بِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ
رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ