

UNWAVERING FAITH

THE MYSTERIES OF TRIALS & TESTS

Introduction & Author

- Book name: Fawa'id al-Balwa wal-Mihan
 - Outlines 16 benefits of trials and hardships
- Author: Izz al-Din ibn Abd al-Salam
 - Born in 577 AH in Damascus
 - He passed away in 660 AH in Cairo
 - Witnessed the reconquest of Jerusalem and the decline of the Crusader presence
 - Lived through the struggles of the Ayyubid princes for power

About the Author

- Izz al-Din ibn Abd al-Salam began seeking knowledge later in life
- Studied with notable scholars in Damascus
- Became the chief Shafi'i scholar in Damascus
- Known for his opposition to innovations and religious deviations
- Fearless in upholding truth and justice

About the Author

- Condemned the alliance with Crusaders
- Delivered a famous sermon denouncing Al-Salih Ismail
- Removed from his position and arrested
- Exiled from Damascus and brought to Crusader camp
- Continued his journey to Egypt
- Faced further challenges with the Mamluk princes
- He declared Mamluk princes as slaves not entitled to interaction
- Left Egypt but returned after the Sultan's plea
- Known for commanding good and forbidding evil
- Praised by scholars like Taj al-Din al-Subki and Ibn Kathir

Benefit #1: Recognizing Allah's Divinity

- Trials reveal Allah's power and our dependence on Him
- Emphasizes the verse: "Surely to Allah we belong and to Him we will return" (Qur'an 2:156)
- Acknowledges that we are Allah's property and His slaves
- Types of hardships:
 - Musibah: anything that harms a believer
 - Mashaqqah: hardship that is heavy upon a person
 - Balwa: a test from Allah, can be good or bad
 - 'Ushr: opposite of ease, causing worry and difficulty

Benefit #1: Recognizing Allah's Divinity

- Allah is the only one who can remove difficulties. This alone should make us recognize His power and might.
- We are not able to do anything alone. This alone should make us recognize how incapable we are.
- The Prophet ﷺ said, “If you need help, seek it from God. Know that if the whole world were to gather together in order to help you, they would not be able to help you except if God had written so. And if the whole world were to gather together in order to harm you, they would not harm you except if God had written so.” – Tirmidhi

Benefit #2: Sincerity to Allah (Ikhlāṣ)

- Being sincere to Allah, because there is no one we can turn to, who can remove our hardships, except Him. Nor is there anyone we can rely on to remove our difficulties except him.
- What does it mean to be 'sincere to Allah'?
 - Al-Izz ibn Abd al-Salam said, "Sincerity is when the obligated person performs obedience purely for Allah alone, not seeking glorification from people, nor reverence, nor attracting religious benefits, nor repelling worldly harm." – Maqasid al-Mukallifin
- Sufyan al-Thawri said, "I have not struggled with anything harder than my intention; it keeps changing on me."
- Allah loves consistency and wants us to keep trying, understanding that He does not expect perfection from us.

Benefit #3: Turning to Allah (Inābah)

- Allah says in Surah Zumar:

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهُ مُنِيبًا إِلَيْهِ

And when man is afflicted by pain, he calls his Lord turning to Him passionately.

- Imam al-Tabari comments on the word ‘munib’ saying that it refers to a person turning to Allah for forgiveness and assistance.
- Why forgiveness?
- The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "If anyone constantly seeks pardon (from Allah), Allah will appoint for him a way out of every distress and a relief from every anxiety, and will provide sustenance for him from where he expects not." – Abu Dawud

Benefit #3: Turning to Allah (Inābah)

- Seeking forgiveness is mainly done after one commits a sin. We seek forgiveness so that Allah wipes away our bad deeds.
- We seek forgiveness for a mistake we commit, yet Allah still gives.
- Allah rewards the one who seeks forgiveness because Allah loves those who seek forgiveness and turn to Him.
- This should encourage us to have istighfar habitually on our tongues. So that Allah removes the difficulties, and so that Allah gives.
- The system of Allah is only for our benefit.

Benefit #4: Supplication & Prayer

- Allah says in Surah Zumar:

فَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا

When one is touched with hardship, they cry out to Us 'alone'

- Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever would like for Allah to answer him during times of hardship and difficulty, let him supplicate often during times of ease.” – Tirmidhi
- We must also make dua during times of ease. How?
 - By thanking Allah for that condition.
 - By praising Allah for all He has done for you.
 - By showing gratitude for everything.

Benefit #4: Supplication & Prayer

- We must also ask plenty
- The Prophet (SAWS) said, “When one of you makes dua for something, let him ask plentifully; for he is asking his Lord.” – Ibn Hibban
 - We should make excessive dua
 - That which is with Allah is limitless
 - Allah loves when we ask Him

Benefit #5: Forbearance (Hilm)

- Forbearance towards the One whom the calamity originated (Allah)
- Allah says in Surah al-Tawbah:

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ

Abraham was truly tender-hearted, forbearing

- The Prophet (SAWS) said to Ashajj Abd al-Qays, "You possess two qualities that Allah loves: forbearance (ḥilm) and patience (anāt)." (Muslim)
- Forbearance is of levels based on the weight of the affliction, some being major and some being minor. Showing forbearance for major afflictions is the greatest type of forbearance

Benefit #5: Forbearance (Hilm)

- Why is Prophet Ibrahim described as being forbearing? Because he was tested greatly:
 - His people, including his family, abandoning him.
 - Being thrown into a fire.
 - Being commanded to slaughter her son.
 - Being commanded to abandon his wife and son in a desert.
- Difference between ḥilm and ṣabr:
 - Forbearance is the act of delaying deserved punishment. Forbearance is only valid from someone who has the capability to punish and undertake disciplinary actions
 - Ibrahim (AS) is considered 'forbearing' because he had the ability to make dua against his people and destroy them; but, he didn't.
 - Patience is the confinement of the soul that encounters adversity, and a man's patience is his restraint from showing panic

Benefit #5: Forbearance (Hilm)

- This forbearance is for Allah. One should not get disheartened or hope in Allah.
- Though He is sending the difficulty, there is a hidden wisdom behind it.
- Allah is the best of planners. We must trust that.
- Imam Taftazani says that it is haram for a person to lose hope in Allah based on the following verse:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ
إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Say, 'O Prophet, that Allah says, 'O My servants who have exceeded the limits against their souls! Do not lose hope in Allah's mercy

Benefit #6: Forgiveness (‘Afw)

- Forgiving the one who brought the hardship
- Allah says in Surah Shura:

فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ

But whoever pardons and seeks reconciliation, then their reward is with Allah. He certainly does not like the wrongdoers.

- Forgiveness lightens the hearts
- Forgiving others will result in Allah forgiving us. Allah says in Surah al-Nur, regarding the incident of the slander of Aisha RA:

وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۚ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love to be forgiven by Allah? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

Benefit #6: Forgiveness (‘Afw)

- Principle in our deen: الجزاء من جنس العمل
 - The reward of a deed is in accordance with its nature
 - Allah will grant us that which we give to others
 - If we are merciful to others, Allah will show us mercy
- The Prophet ﷺ said:

الرَّاحِمُونَ يَرْحَمُهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ ارْحَمُوا مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَرْحَمْكُمْ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ

The merciful will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Be merciful to those on the earth, and the One in the heavens will have mercy upon you. (Tirmidhi)

Benefit #6: Forgiveness (‘Afw)

- How can we forgive people and remove any ill feelings we have in our hearts against people?
 - Look into the life of our beloved Prophet (SAWS). How many people did he forgive?
 - Reminding yourself of the virtues of forgiveness based on the above narrations and verses.
 - Make dua for the person who hurt you. Dua of guidance. This will soften the heart towards them.
 - Communicate with the individual. There is a chance the perpetrator's intentions weren't bad.

Benefit #7: Patience (Şabr)

- Being patient during the difficulty
- Allah says, “Only those who endure patiently will be given their reward without limit.”
- The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “No one has been given a gift better and more vast than patience.” (Bukhari)
- Patience is the only deed whose reward is limitless.
- Patience is to restrain one’s self and to not lose control to a point where one says or does something displeasing to Allah.
- The Prophet ﷺ said, “Verily, patience is at the first strike”
 - Our patience is truly tested right when the calamity befalls us
 - That is when it’s the most difficult to control oneself

Benefit #7: Patience (Ṣabr)

- How can we be more patient individuals?
 - The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Whoever strives to be patient, Allah will make them patient.” – Bukhari
 - We must want to be patient and make dua for Allah to give us patience
- The Prophet ﷺ displayed patience during the first moments when his son, Ibrahim, passed away
- The Prophet ﷺ said: the magnitude of the reward goes along with the magnitude of the affliction. When God loves people, He afflicts them, and those who accept it gladly receive God’s good pleasure, but those who are displeased receive God’s displeasure. – Tirmidhi
- The righteous ones of the past would be happy whenever they experienced hardship.
- Imam Hakim al-Naysaburi mentions the following hadith referring to the righteous ones, “They have greater joy in affliction than one of you has in gifts.”

Benefit #8: Joy Over Its Benefits

- The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “And indeed, they would rejoice in adversity just as you rejoice in ease.” – Ibn Majah
- Abdullah b. Masud said, “How commendable are the two disliked things: death and poverty.”
- The righteous ones would be happy during these types of afflictions. Not because of the difficulty. Rather, because of the reward that comes with it.
- This doesn't mean that we should wish for difficulties.
- It just means that if a calamity befalls us, we should try to remember the rewards that come with it due to having patience.
- The reward should bring some joy and ease.

Benefit #9: Gratitude

- Allah says, “If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more.”
- How do we show gratitude to Allah?
 - Praising Him
 - Verbally thanking Him
 - Obeying Him
 - Having the habit of thanking people
 - The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “One cannot be thank Allah if they do not thank people.” - Ahmad
- Imam Qurtubi said: It is narrated from Dawud AS that he said: 'O Lord, how can I thank You, when me thanking You is yet another blessing from You upon me?' He said: 'O David, now you have thanked Me.'
 - Thus, true gratitude is this acknowledgment of the blessing by the benefactor.
 - It's to acknowledge that we can never fully thank Allah for everything he has given us and done for us.

Benefit #10: Purification from Sin

- The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Nothing afflicts a Muslim of hardship, nor illness, nor anxiety, nor sorrow, nor harm, nor distress, nor even the pricking of a thorn, but that Allah will expiate his sins by it.” – Bukhari
- Hardships are a means of our sins being forgiven
- Anything that causes even the smallest discomfort, internally or externally, Allah will forgive our sins because of it
- Allah wants us to succeed and He has given us the tools to do so
 - Allah says in Surah al-Nisa:

وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ

Allāh wants to accept your repentance

Benefit #11: Mercy to Others

- Mercy towards those afflicted and assisting them in their trials
- It has been reported that ‘Isa the son of Maryam (AS), said, “Some people are afflicted by wrong action and some people are protected from it. Be merciful to the people of affliction and praise Allah for His protection.” – Malik in his Muwatta
- Collectively as Muslims, we have been commanded to be merciful to those who are suffering. It is a communal command.
- We have been commanded to show kindness and mercy to animals, and it is even more emphasized to show the same to fellow humans.
- When we speak to someone, we must consider their condition before letting out our words.
- We must not find a reason to be kind to a person. Kindness should be viewed as something integral to our Iman.

Benefit #12: Recognizing the Blessing of 'Afiyah

- Hardship and calamities allow us to be grateful for times of ease
- We understand the true meaning of health after sickness
- We understand the true meaning of wealth after poverty
- Our Prophet (SAWS) gives us advice on how to understand and internalize being in a good state/condition

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ

انْظُرُوا إِلَى مَنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَا تَنْظُرُوا إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ فَوْقَكُمْ فَهُوَ أَجْدَرُ أَنْ لَا تَزْدَرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Look at those below you and do not look at those above you, lest you belittle the favors of Allah."

(Muslim)

Benefit #13: The Reward in the Akhirah

- What Allah has prepared in terms of the reward of the afterlife for these tribulations
- The reward of the akhirah is greater than the reward of dunya.
- This dunya is low in essence. The word 'dunya' is rooted from the word 'dinayah', which literally means 'despicable' or 'vile'.
- For those who experienced much hardship in this world, being dipped into Jannah once will make them forget all that which they went through.

Anas ibn Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "The most privileged people in the world among the people of Hellfire will come on the Day of Resurrection to be dipped in Hellfire, then it will be said: O son of Adam, did you see any good? Did you get any blessing? He will say: No, by Allah, my Lord! Then, the most miserable people in the world among the people of Paradise will come on the Day of Resurrection to be dipped in Paradise, then it will be said: O son of Adam, did you see any hardship? Did you have any distress? He will say: No, by Allah, my Lord! I did not once see hardship or distress." - Muslim

Benefit #14: Hidden Benefits in Hardships

- Allah says in Surah al-Nisa:

فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

It is quite likely that you dislike something and Allah has placed a lot of good in it

- There is a hidden wisdom behind everything Allah puts us through. It's not always apparent. However, the more time that passes, the more apparent it will become.
- The story of Musa AS and Khidr
 - From the outside, Musa thought that Khidr was doing something wrong and evil.
 - But later on, Allah revealed the wisdoms behind Khidr's actions.
- Ibrahim's AS sacrifice of leaving Hajar and Ismail is what paved the way for Islam to come to the Arab Peninsula
- Just because something seems bad in our eyes, it does not mean its essence is bad.

Benefit #15: Prevents Arrogance

- It prevents arrogance, extravagance, boasting, haughtiness, pride, and tyranny
- Fir'awn and Nimrud were two tyrants who never experienced hardship. They become arrogant and tyrannical.
- Those who go through hardship are usually humble, soft, and wise.
- For these noble benefits, those who were tested most severely were the prophets, then the next best, and the next, like those who were driven out of their homes and possessions, and became strangers in their lands, and those who gained many enemies.

Benefit #16: The Pleasure of Allah

- Being happy with Allah's decree leads to the pleasure of Allah
- Attaining the pleasure of Allah is the greatest thing we can attain in this life and the next.
- The Prophet ﷺ said:

إن الله - عز وجل - يقول لأهل الجنة : يا أهل الجنة ، فيقولون : لبيك يا ربنا وسعديك ، والخير في يديك . فيقول : هل رضيتم ؟ فيقولون : وما لنا لا نرضى يا رب ، وقد أعطيتنا ما لم تعط أحدا من خلقك . فيقول : ألا أعطيكم أفضل من ذلك ؟ فيقولون : يا رب ، وأي شيء أفضل من ذلك ؟ فيقول : أحل عليكم رضواني فلا أسخط عليكم بعده أبدا

Allah - the Almighty - says to the people of Paradise: 'O people of Paradise,' and they say: 'We are present, O our Lord, and at Your pleasure, and all good is in Your hands.' He says: 'Are you pleased?' They say: 'And why should we not be pleased, O Lord, when You have given us what You have not given to any of Your creation?' He says: 'Shall I not give you something better than that?' They say: 'O Lord, and what thing is better than that?' He says: 'I bestow upon you My pleasure, and I shall never be displeased with you ever after.'