

Merits of the Soul: Trials and Tribulations – Bala

Merits of the Soul: Trials and Tribulations - Bala'



**Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library
Project - DILP**

Al-Islam.org

Article

Merits of the Soul: Trials and Tribulations – Bala’

“Blessed is He in Whose hand is the kingdom, and He has power over all things” (Qur'an, 67: 1)

***“(He) Who created death and life so that He may test you—which of you is best in deeds...”
(Qur'an, 67:2)***

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a) said: “The greatness of man's reward goes with the greatness of suffering, and God did not love a people but that He subjected them to suffering.”

[Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p.252, hadith # 3]

Al-Imam al-Baqir (a) said “Verily, God Almighty treats the believer with tribulations in the same way as a man treats his family with gifts after an absence (upon a journey), and He restrains him from the world in the same way as the physician prescribes restraints for the sick man.”

[Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p.255, hadith # 17]

What is Bala’ (trials and tribulations)?

- All that with which God tries His servants are *bala’* and *ibtala’*, whether it is with diseases and ailments, adversities like poverty, humiliation and loss of worldly fortunes or something opposite such as acquisition of power and glory, wealth, riches, high status, honour and the like. However, whenever *bala’*, *baliyyah* or *ibtala’* and the like are mentioned, these are the former kind of things.

The Levels And Severity Of Trials And Tribulations

Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: “**Verily, it is mentioned in the Book of ‘Ali that of all mankind the prophets undergo the severest of trials, and after them the *awsiya’* (vicegerents), and after them the elect to the extent of their nobility. Indeed, believer undergoes trial in proportion to his good deeds. So, one whose faith is sound and whose deeds are good, his trials are also more severe. That is indeed because God Almighty did not make this world a place for rewarding the believer and punishing the unbeliever. And one whose faith is feeble and whose (good) deeds are few faces**

fewer tribulations. Verily, tribulations hasten towards believer with greater speed than rainwater towards earth's depths." [Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p.259, hadith no.29]

- Trials and tribulations are both bodily and spiritual. Persons of weak intellects and feeble minds are usually secure from spiritual tribulations while intellectual suffering is in proportion to their intellectual weakness and feebleness of their sensibility. On the contrary, those who are more intelligent and have higher abilities have to undergo mental and spiritual tribulations more intensely in proportion to the perfectness and sharpness of their intellect and abilities.
- Whoever perceives the greatness and glory of the Lord to a greater extent and knows the sacred station of God more than others, suffers more and is tormented to greater extent by the sins of creatures and their offences against the Lord's sanctity. Also, one who has a greater love and compassion for creatures of God is tormented to a greater extent by their crooked and wretched condition and ways.
- The Prophet of God (s) was perfect in all the sacred stations and his nearness to God and higher than all of the prophets and the *awliya'* in respect of his degree of excellence and perfection. Hence his torment and suffering were greater than that of any one of them. That's why Prophet of God (s) said: **"No prophet was tormented to the extent that I was."** [*Bihar al-Anwar*, v.39, p.56]

The Divine Wisdom Behind Trials And Tribulations

Imam al-Baqir (a) said: **"Verily, God Almighty treats the believer with tribulations in the same way as a man treats his family with gifts after an absence (upon a journey), and He restrains him from the world in the same way as the physician prescribes restraints for the sick man."** [*Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 255, hadith # 17]

- God sent prophets and heavenly scriptures for the guidance and for the sake of the separation of humanity into the happy, felicitous and obedient from the sinful wretched and disobedient. Thus, the one who attains felicity and eternal rewards does so through divine help and guidance, and the one who earns wretchedness and falls into destruction by following Satan and his own mundane desires.

- The meaning of divine trials and testing is the examination of human beings for the separation of the successful ones from the failures. During this process, the proof (*hujjah*) of God is established over the creatures as a piece of evidence of how did they perform and there remains no room for objection for anyone.

Why Sinners Are Usually Not Punished In This World

- God Almighty doesn't immediately punish the one who commits some sin or indecency or perpetrates some injustice or aggression against someone in this world. This is because it is contrary to this world's order set by God and opposed to His plan for the creation of world and Hereafter.
- This world is realm of carrying out deeds, not an abode of disclosure of results of one's deeds and qualities. If sometimes God punishes a sinner, it is be due to His mercy for that sinner (to stop him from sinning further). For, when God leaves sinful or tyrant to himself, His wrath takes form of *istidraj* (gradual seizing).
- Holy Qur'an: ***"And let not the unbelievers suppose that the respite We grant them is better for them; We grant them respite only that they may increase in sin; and there awaits them a humiliating chastisement."*** (3: 178)
- Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: **"When a person commits a sin and the blessing (that he had received) is renewed for him, he leaves off asking for forgiveness (*istighfar*), and this is *al-istidraj* (as mentioned in verse 7:182)." [Bihar al-Anwar, v.5, p.215].** Thus, such a person commits more sins without *istighfar*.

Few Hadiths In Praise Of Tribulations Of Believers

- Prophet of God (s): **"You cannot become a believer until you take trials as blessings and comforts as trials because the trials of this world are blessings of Hereafter and comforts of this world are difficulties of Hereafter."** [Bihar al-Anwar, v.67, p.237]

- Imam Ali (a) said: **“You will be certainly tested with severe trials. You will be tested (like passing) through sieve until your lowest will rise higher and your top ones will fall down. Similarly, those left behind because of their deficiencies will catch up and excel and those who were leading will be left behind.”** [*Bihar al-Anwar* v.5, p.218]
- Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: **“Trial is the beauty of a believer and honour of intellect because it’s interaction and accompanying him and his patience and steadfastness over it is the sign of sound health of his faith.”** [*Bihar al-Anwar* v.67, p.231]
- Imam Ali (a) said: **“When you see that your Lord is sending you trials one after the other, thank Him. When you see that He is sending you blessings one after the other, be warned.”** [*Mizan al-Hikmah*, hadith # 1924]
- Imam Hasan Askari (a): **“There is no trial that is not associated with a blessing from God which surrounds it.”** [*Bihar al-Anwar*, v.78, p.374]

Advice To Face Bala’ – A Realistic Approach To Life

- It is a common observation that hardships, unexpected painful events, diseases, disasters, accidents and deaths occur everywhere in the world. No person, no family, no country, no community and no nation from richest to poorest, is safe from afflictions and no technology can prevent all of them. An intelligent mind must learn and often remind itself of this basic lesson of life.
- Another fact is that painful events and afflictions in this world go hand in hand with pleasures and happy incidences in life. Every blessing that makes a person happy and comfortable is sooner or later followed by a painful incident that makes him sad and stressed. This subtle relationship is universal and inseparable.
- Thus, to lead a stable and successful life, one must adopt a realistic mindset, give up utopic imagination of becoming free from pain, diseases, accidents and afflictions in this

world and get ready to face hardships and unexpected challenges all the time. One must also accept basic laws and appreciate deep and delicate wisdom behind the design governing the balance of happiness and pleasures and sadness and pain occurring in one's life.

- A person becomes more intelligent, smart, courageous and practically successful when he lives in a challenging environment facing diverse difficulties especially earlier in his life. Thus, difficulties, hardships and challenges are in fact a blessing in disguise that stimulate one's brain to be more active, creative and resilient in order to find new solutions and prepare for better responses in future.
- Several common psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety, stress and insomnia occur because the afflicted person has not realized, understood and accepted basic facts and realities of life, such as death, which can occur anytime to anyone, shocking events, accidents, severe disease, sudden loss of wealth, property and job, etc. Anticipation of unexpected difficult situations and their whole hearted acceptance can protect a person from these psychiatric disorders.
- Recent scientific research has shown that human brain can handle short term stress which is also a protective and preparative response designed by God to handle it. However, if stress continues for longer time, it slowly damages the brain and also leads to psychiatric problems mentioned above. Thus, a solution should be sought for which should also be practical, cheaper, easy to use and universal.
- Why should a human being feel helpless and hopeless in face of hardships and afflictions of life? Almighty God who created him has offered best solution of praying to Him, talking intimately to Him in private, requesting Him for help, being patient as He has advised His creatures to be and pondering over Divine Wisdom behind pain, trial and affliction and finally having complete faith in Him.

Conclusion

- Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: “**A believer doesn’t pass 40 nights being afflicted with an affliction that makes him sad so that he takes lesson from it.**” [*Mizan al-Hikmah*, hadith # 1924]

[Get PDF](#) [2] [Get EPUB](#) [3] [Get MOBI](#) [4]

Topic Tags:

[Akhlaq](#) [5]

[Tests & Trials](#) [6]

[Tribulation](#) [7]

Source URL: <https://al-islam.org/articles/merits-soul-trials-tribulations-bala>

Links

[1] <https://www.addtoany.com/share>

[2] <https://al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/214906>

[3] <https://al-islam.org/printepub/book/export/html/214906>

[4] <https://al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/214906>

[5] <https://al-islam.org/tags/akhlaq>

[6] <https://al-islam.org/tags/tests-trials>

[7] <https://al-islam.org/tags/tribulation>