

The Believer's Need for Steadfastness

(Translated)

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Allah (swt) said, **يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ** “Allah keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word (al-qawl ath-thaabit), in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. And Allah sends astray the wrongdoers. And Allah does what He wills.” [TMQ Surah Ibrahim: 27]

The noble ayah contains three sentences. In the Arabic language, it is known that a sentence is a set of words that carries a meaning and expresses a thought. Thought is a judgment about a reality, and it becomes a concept for a person, when they understand the reality of the thought and believe it.

Thus, the Quranic verse contains three concepts that a Muslim is required to adopt: 1. Allah's (swt) granting of steadfastness to the believers with the firm word (al-Qawl ath-Thabit) in this worldly life and in the Hereafter 2. Allah's (swt) leading the wrongdoers astray. 3. Allah (swt) does whatever He wills.

Regarding the first concept in the first sentence, Ibn Ashur says, **وَالْقَوْلُ، الْكَلَامُ، وَالثَّابِتُ الصَّادِقُ، الَّذِي لَا شَكَّ فِيهِ. وَالْمُرَادُ بِهِ أَقْوَالُ الْقُرْآنِ لِأَنَّهَا صَادِقَةٌ الْمَعْنَى وَاضِحَةُ الدَّلِيلِ، فَالتَّعْرِيفُ فِي الْقَوْلِ لَا سِتْغَرَاقَ الْأَقْوَالِ الثَّابِتَةِ. وَالْبَاءُ فِي الْقَوْلِ لِلْسَّبَبِيَّةِ. وَمَعْنَى تَثْبِيتِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِهَا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسِّرُ لَهُمْ فِيهِمُ الْأَقْوَالِ الْإِلَهِيَّةَ عَلَى وَجْهِهَا وَإِدْرَاكَ دَلِيلِهَا حَتَّى أَطْمَأْنَنْتَ إِلَيْهَا فُلُوبُهُمْ وَلَمْ يُخَامِرْهُمْ فِيهَا شَكٌّ فَأَصْبَحُوا ثَابِتِينَ فِي إِيْمَانِهِمْ غَيْرَ مَزْعُوعِينَ وَعَامِلِينَ بِهَا غَيْرَ مُتَرَدِّدِينَ. وَذَلِكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ظَاهِرٌ،** “The word (al-qawl) means speech, and ‘firm’ (al-thabit) means truthful, without any doubt. What is meant by it are the words of the Qur’an, for they are truthful in meaning and clear in evidence. The definite article in ‘the word’ (al-qawl) denotes comprehensiveness of all firm words. The preposition ‘bi’ in bi'l-qawl indicates causation. The meaning of Allah's (swt) making those who believe steadfast through it is that Allah (swt) facilitates for them the divine words in their proper form and enables them to understand their proofs until their hearts are reassured by them, and no doubt ever enters them. Thus, they become steadfast in their faith, unshaken, and act upon it without hesitation. This is evident in worldly life; as for the Hereafter, it is by them finding circumstances similar to what they learned in the world, so they feel no regret nor grief.”

It is clear to anyone with insight the necessity of steadfastness for the believer in this life, in the grave, and on the Day of Judgment, and his need for Allah's granting him steadfastness, for this world is a place of trial and temptation.

Allah (swt) says, **وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ** “And We test you with evil and with good as trial; and to Us you will be returned.” [TMQ Surah Al-Anbiya 35]

And He (swt) says, **أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يَتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا ءَامَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ** “Do the people think that they will be left to say, ‘We believe’ and they will not be tested?” [TMQ Surah Al-Ankaboot 2].

Every believer is exposed to trials from time to time of various kinds. This is affirmed in the hadith found in Sahih al-Jami narrated by Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman from the Messenger of Allah (saw), **«شَعْرُ الْفِتَنِ عَلَى الْقُلُوبِ عَرَضَ الْحَصِيرِ عَوْداً عَوْداً، فَإِنَّ قَلْبَ أَشْرَبِهَا نُكْتُتَ فِيهِ نُكْتَةٌ سَوْدَاءُ، وَأَيُّ قَلْبٍ أَنْكَرَهَا نُكْتُتَ فِيهِ نُكْتَةٌ بَيْضَاءُ، حَتَّى يَصِيرَ الْقَلْبُ أَبْيَضَ مِثْلَ الصَّفَا، لَا تَضُرُّهُ فِتْنَةٌ مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ، وَالْآخِرُ أَسْوَدُ مُرَبِّدًا كَالْكُوزِ مَجْجِيًا، لَا يَعْرِفُ مَعْرُوفًا، وَلَا يَنْكُرُ مُنْكَرًا، إِلَّا مَا أَشْرَبَ مِنْ هَوَاهُ»** “Temptations will be presented to the hearts like a reed mat, stick by stick. Any heart that absorbs them will have a black mark put in it, and any heart that rejects them will have a white mark put in it, until the heart becomes white like a stone, unaffected by any trial of temptation so long as the

heavens and the earth endure. However, the other becomes black, dusty, like an overturned vessel, not recognizing good nor rejecting evil, except what is in accord with its desires.”

Indeed, Allah even bestows His favor upon His Messenger (saw) by granting him steadfastness so that he does not incline towards the disbelievers. Allah (swt) says, ﴿وَلَوْلَا أَن تَبَيَّنَّاكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرْكُنُ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا﴾ “And if We had not strengthened you, you would almost have inclined to them a little.” [TMQ Surah Al-Isra 74].

The “firm word” includes the statement of tawhid (monotheism) “La ilaha illa Allah - There is no God but Allah,” as Ibn Abbas (ra) said. It also includes the words of the Qur’an, as Ibn Ashur stated, and it encompasses everything that stems from the Islamic creed and everything built upon it, for it is the standard by which a Muslim measures every word and every action.

Describing the word as “firm” indicates steadfastness and commitment to that word, so as to produce uprightness, which Allah (swt) commanded His Messenger (saw) and the believers with, in His saying, ﴿فَاسْتَقِمَّ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ﴾ “So remain steadfast as you have been commanded, you and those who have turned back with you.” [TMQ Surah Hud: 112].

Allah’s granting steadfastness to those who believe is a reality both in the life of this world and in the Hereafter.

As for the **second concept** in the verse — Allah’s leading the wrongdoers astray — Ibn Ashur says, وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ، أَيِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ، أَيِ يَجْعَلُهُمْ فِي حَيْرَةٍ وَعَمَالِيَةٍ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ. وَالضَّلَالُ: اضْطِرَابٌ “And Allah leads the wrongdoers astray, meaning the mushrikeen, that is, He leaves them in bewilderment and blindness in this world and in the Hereafter. Misguidance is disturbance and confusion, and the wrongdoers are the mushrikeen, as Allah (swt) said, ﴿إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾ “Indeed, associating others with Allah is a great injustice.” [TMQ Surah Luqman: 13]”

The misguidance attributed to Allah (swt) is in the form of allowing, facilitating, and gradually leading on, not compulsion, because Allah (swt) holds people accountable for the deeds they perform within the domain over which they have control: if good, then it is good; and if evil, then it is evil. This is indicated by His saying

﴿فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ*وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ﴾

“So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” [TMQ Surah Al-Zalzalah: 7–8] and other similar verses.

What further confirms that Allah’s leading the wrongdoers astray is by way of allowing, facilitating, and leading them on is His statement, ﴿قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الضَّلَالَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ مَدًّا﴾ “Say, ‘Whoever is in error — the Most Merciful will prolong his span [in error]’” [TMQ Surah Maryam: 75].

This misguidance from Allah (swt) is specific to those characterized by wrongdoing, as is indicated by linking the ruling to a derived term (مشتق), the subject case (اسم الفاعل) al-zalimin (“the oppressors”). In the usool of fiqh (foundations of jurisprudence), linking a ruling to a derived term evidences that the cause lies in the source of derivation, here, wrongdoing. Thus, as long as the servant persists in wrongdoing, he deserves misguidance until he turns away from his wrongdoing and repents to Allah (swt).

It is more appropriate to understand zulm (oppression) here in its general sense, so that it includes polytheism (shirk) and disbelief (kufr), as well as wrongdoing against oneself, and committing sins, since there is no specific qualifier that restricts zulm to mean only polytheism.

As for the statement of Allah (swt), ﴿إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾ **“Indeed, associating others with Allah is a great injustice”** [TMQ Surah Luqman: 13] it indicates that polytheism is described as *ẓulm*, and indeed as a great *ẓulm*, but it does not mean that *ẓulm* is limited exclusively to polytheism. This is what the rules of Arabic grammar mandate.

Accordingly, anyone who is characterized by any form of wrongdoing deserves to be led astray, and prolonged in that state until he repents from it, whether it is polytheism and disbelief, or an evil deed, or wrongdoing against oneself. Allah (swt) said, ﴿قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَنْتَهُوا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ﴾ **“Say to those who disbelieve that if they desist, they will be forgiven for what has passed.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Anfal: 38] and He (swt) also says, ﴿وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا﴾ **“And whoever does evil or wrongs himself, then seeks Allah’s forgiveness, will find Allah All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”** [TMQ Surah An-Nisa: 110].

As for **the third concept** in the noble Quranic verse, it is that Allah (swt) does whatever He (swt) wills. He (swt) is capable of all matters; nothing can prevent Him, none can overturn His judgment, and none can repel His command. He (swt) does with His creation whatever He wills.

This concept comes as a confirmation of what preceded it: Allah (swt) grants steadfastness when He (swt) wills to grant it, and He (swt) leads astray when He (swt) wills to lead astray. Indeed, He (swt) is not to be questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned.

The verse contains a rhetorical nuance, namely the explicit mention of the subject case in all three sentences, as the Divine Name, “Allah makes firm,” “Allah leads astray,” and “Allah does what He wills.”

Ibn Ashur says about this, *وَإِظْهَارُ اسْمِ الْجَلَالَةِ فِي وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ لِقَصْدِ أَنْ تَكُونَ كُلُّ جُمْلَةٍ*, “The explicit mention of the Name of His Majesty in ‘Allah leads astray the wrongdoers’ and ‘Allah does whatever He wills’ is intended so that each of the three sentences stands independently in its meaning, until it flows like a proverb,” in addition to emphasizing the importance of the subject, Glorified and Exalted is He, and His Power to do whatever He wills.”

Finally, we point out that some mufasiroon among them al-Ṭabari, al-Qurṭubi, and others mentioned that the Reason (*sabab*) for the Revelation (*nuzool*) of the verse was the questioning of the deceased by the two angels in the grave. However, this does not necessitate restriction, because of the principle that, *العبرة بعموم اللفظ لا بخصوص السبب* “the consideration is given to the generality of the wording, not the specificity of the cause (*sabab*),” as established in the *usool ul-fiqh* (foundations of jurisprudence).

Thus, Allah’s making the believers firm is a reality both in this world and in the Hereafter; Allah’s leading astray is a reality for the wrongdoers as long as they persist in their wrongdoing; and Allah does whatever He wills, as indicated by the generality of the connecting pronoun (*ism mawsool*) “whatever.”

We ask Allah (swt) to guide us and all the Muslims to the truth, and to make us and them steadfast upon the truth until we meet Him (swt) while He is pleased with us.