

ZEAL AND ENTHUSIASM DESCRIBED IN THE QUR'AN

**"Do not weaken and do not grieve,
and you will be superior
if you are believers."
(Surat al 'Imran, 139)**

HARUN YAHYA

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author, who writes under the pen name Harun Yahya, was born in Ankara in 1956. Having completed his primary and secondary education in Ankara, he then studied arts at Istanbul's Mimar Sinan University and philosophy at Istanbul University. Since the 1980s, the author has published many books on political, faith-related and scientific issues. Harun Yahya is well known as an author who has written important works disclosing the imposture of evolutionists, the invalidity of their claims, and the dark liaisons between Darwinism and bloody ideologies such as fascism and communism.

His pen-name is made up of the names "Harun" (Aaron) and "Yahya" (John), in memory of the two esteemed prophets who fought against lack of faith. The Prophet's seal on the cover of the books is symbolic and is linked to their contents. It represents the Qur'an (the final scripture) and Prophet Muhammad (saas), the last of the prophets. Under the guidance of the Qur'an and sunnah, the author makes it his purpose to disprove each one of the fundamental tenets of godless ideologies and completely silence the objections raised against religion. The seal of the final Prophet symbolizes this "last word."

All the author's works center around one goal: to convey the Qur'an's message to people, encourage them to think about basic faith-related issues (such as the existence of Allah, His unity and the Hereafter), and to expose the feeble foundations and perverted ideologies of godless systems.

Harun Yahya enjoys a wide readership in many countries, and some of his books are available in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Urdu, Arabic, Albanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat (Bosnian), Polish, Malay, Uygur Turkish, and Indonesian. They are enjoyed by readers worldwide.

These works have been instrumental in many people recovering faith in Allah and in many others gaining a deeper insight into their faith. The wisdom and easy-to-understand style gives these books a distinct touch, which directly effects anyone who reads or studies them. Unquestionably, these works are characterized by their features of rapid effectiveness, definite results and irrefutability. It is unlikely that those who read these books and give serious thought to them can any longer sincerely advocate the materialistic philosophy, atheism or any other perverted ideology or philosophy. Even if they continue to do so, it will be only a sentimental insistence since these books refute such ideologies from their very foundations. All contemporary movements of denial are now ideologically defeated, thanks in good measure to the collection of books written by Maruun Yahata using the wisdom and lucidity of the Qur'an. The author modestly intends to serve as a means in humanity's search for Allah's right path. No material gain is sought in the publication of these works.

Considering these facts, those who encourage people to read these books, which open the "eyes" of the heart and guide them to become more devoted servants of Allah, render an invaluable service. The sole aim of Harun Yahya's books is to overcome disbelief and to disseminate the moral values of the Qur'an. The success and impact of this service are manifest in readers' convictions.

One point should be kept in mind: the main reason for the continuing cruelty, conflict and all the ordeals the majority of people undergo is the ideological prevalence of disbelief. This state can only be ended with the defeat of disbelief and by conveying the wonders of creation and Qur'anic morality so

that people can live by it. Considering the state of the world today, which leads people into the downward spiral of violence, corruption and conflict, it is clear that this service must be provided more speedily and effectively.

It is no exaggeration to say that the collection of books by Harun Yahya has assumed a leading role. By the will of Allah these books will be a means through which people in the 21st century will attain the peace, justice and happiness promised in the Qur'an.

Works of the author include The New Masonic Order, Judaism and Freemasonry, Global Freemasonry, Islam Denounces Terrorism, Terrorism: The Devil's Ritual, The Disasters Darwinism Brought to Humanity, Communism in Ambush, Fascism: The Bloody Ideology of Darwinism, The "Secret Hand" in Bosnia, Behind the Scenes of The Holocaust, Behind the Scenes of Terrorism, Israel's Kurdish Card, The Oppression Policy of Communist China and Eastern Turkestan, Palestine, Solution: The Values of the Qur'an, The Winter of Islam and Its Expected Spring, Articles 1-2-3, Romanticism: A Weapon of Satan, Signs from the Chapter of the Cave to the Last Times, Signs of the Last Day, The Last Times and The Beast of the Earth, Truths 1-2, The Western World Turns to God, The Evolution Deceit, Precise Answers to Evolutionists, The Blunders of Evolutionists, Confessions of Evolutionists, The Qur'an Denies Darwinism, Perished Nations, For Men of Understanding, The Prophet Moses, The Prophet Joseph, The Prophet Mohammed, The Prophet Solomon, The Golden Age, Allah's Artistry in Color, Glory is Everywhere, The Importance of the Evidences of Creation, The Truth of the Life of This World, The Nightmare of Disbelief, Knowing the Truth, Eternity Has Already Begun, Timelessness and the Reality of Fate, Matter: Another Name for Illusion, The Little Man in the Tower, Islam and the Philosophy of Karma, The Dark Magic of Darwinism, The Religion of Darwinism, The Collapse of the Theory of Evolution in 20 Questions, Allah is Known Through Reason, The Qur'an Leads the Way to Science, The Real Origin of Life, Consciousness in the Cell, A String of Miracles, The Creation of the Universe, Miracles of the Qur'an, The Design in Nature, Self-Sacrifice and Intelligent Behavior Models in Animals, The End of Darwinism, Deep Thinking, Never Plead Ignorance, The Green Miracle: Photosynthesis, The Miracle in the Cell, The Miracle in the Eye, The Miracle in the Spider, The Miracle in the Gnat, The Miracle in the Ant, The Miracle of the Immune System, The Miracle of Creation in Plants, The Miracle in the Atom, The Miracle in the Honeybee, The Miracle of Seed, The Miracle of Hormone, The Miracle of the Termite, The Miracle of the Human Body, The Miracle of Man's Creation, The Miracle of Protein, The Miracle of Smell and Taste, The Secrets of DNA.

The author's children's books are Wonders of Allah's Creation, The World of Animals, The Glory in the Heavens, Wonderful Creatures, Let's Learn Our Islam, The World of Our Little Friends: The Ants, Honeybees That Build Perfect Combs, Skillful Dam Builders: Beavers.

The author's works on Qur'anic topics include The Basic Concepts in the Qur'an, The Moral Values of the Qur'an, Quick Grasp of Faith 1-2-3, Ever Thought About the Truth?, Crude Understanding of Disbelief, Devoted to Allah, Abandoning the Society of Ignorance, The Real Home of Believers: Paradise, Knowledge of the Qur'an, Qur'an Index, Emigrating for the Cause of Allah, The Character of the Hypocrite in the Qur'an, The Secrets of the Hypocrite, The Names of Allah, Communicating the Message and Disputing in the Qur'an, Answers from the Qur'an, Death Resurrection Hell, The Struggle of the Messengers, The Avowed Enemy of Man: Satan, The Greatest

Slander: Idolatry, The Religion of the Ignorant, The Arrogance of Satan, Prayer in the Qur'an, The Theory of Evolution, The Importance of Conscience in the Qur'an, The Day of Resurrection, Never Forget, Disregarded Judgements of the Qur'an, Human Characters in the Society of Ignorance, The Importance of Patience in the Qur'an, General Information from the Qur'an, The Mature Faith, Before You Regret, Our Messengers Say, The Mercy of Believers, The Fear of Allah, Jesus Will Return, Beauties Presented by the Qur'an for Life, A Bouquet of the Beauties of Allah 1-2-3-4, The Iniquity Called "Mockery," The Mystery of the Test, The True Wisdom According to the Qur'an, The Struggle Against the Religion of Irreligious, The School of Yusuf, The Alliance of the Good, Slanders Spread Against Muslims Throughout History, The Importance of Following the Good Word, Why Do You Deceive Yourself?, Islam: The Religion of Ease, Zeal and Enthusiasm Described in the Qur'an, Seeing Good in All, How Do the Unwise Interpret the Qur'an?, Some Secrets of the Qur'an, The Courage of Believers, Being Hopeful in the Qur'an, Justice and Tolerance in the Qur'an, Basic Tenets of Islam, Those Who Do Not Listen to the Qur'an, Taking the Qur'an As a Guide, A Lurking Threat: Heedlessness, Sincerity in the Qur'an.

TO THE READER

In all the books by the author faith-related issues are explained in light of Qur'anic verses, and people are invited to learn Allah's words and to live by them. All the subjects that concern Allah's verses are explained in such a way as to leave no room for doubt or question marks in the reader's mind. The sincere, plain and fluent style employed ensures that everyone of every age and from every social group can easily understand the books. The effective and lucid narrative makes it possible to read them in a single sitting. Even those who rigorously reject spirituality are influenced by the facts recounted in these books and cannot refute the truthfulness of their contents.

This book and all the other works by Harun Yahya can be read individually or discussed in a group. Those readers who are willing to profit from the books will find discussion very useful in that they will be able to relate their own reflections and experiences to one another.

In addition, it is a great service to the religion to contribute to the presentation and circulation of these books, which are written solely for the good pleasure of Allah. The author's evidences are extremely convincing, so for those who want to communicate the religion to other people, one of the most effective methods is to encourage them to read these books.

In them one will not find the personal views of the author, explanations based on dubious sources, styles unobservant of the respect and reverence due to sacred subjects, or hopeless, doubt-creating and pessimistic accounts that create deviations in the heart.

INTRODUCTION

Believers are people who make earning the approval of Allah the ultimate purpose of their lives and strive hard for this cause. In the Qur'an, **Allah calls them the ones who strive with their properties and their lives in the cause of Allah**¹. Because they have devoted their lives to Allah and are willing to offer everything they have, material and otherwise, for the pleasure of Allah and Paradise, believers have a very important attribute that enables them to commit themselves and to say under the most trying circumstances: **"Sufficient for us is Allah."**² It is their eagerness to earn the approval of Allah.

The zeal granted by faith is a power that increases one's physical and mental capacity, enabling him to lead every moment of his life in the best and most productive way. This enthusiasm consequential to love of Allah provides a person with spiritual power, great strength and resistance, a steel-like will and courage. Through spiritual power believers overcome every difficulty and continue to strive hard for Allah whatever the conditions and circumstances may be.

This book discusses the zeal of believers that continues to increase until the end of their lives. Its purpose is to encourage all Muslims to be more zealous by showing how great a blessing zeal is as an attribute which strengthens believers. The reader will understand the important secret that makes one successful even under the most difficult conditions. Furthermore, he will learn of the bounties that have been promised to those who never lose their zeal and who meet difficulties by putting their trust in Allah. This book encourages people to comply with His directive:

"Hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden [i.e., Paradise] as wide as the heavens and earth."³

An additional aim is to motivate those who merely follow a middle course when living the principles of Islam and feel satisfied with this rather than striving to be among the forerunners.

¹ See *Surah al Hujurat*, 49:15

² *Surah al Imran*, 3:173

³ *Surah al Imran*, 3:133

WHAT IS ZEAL?

Zeal and excitement are, in fact, intensely experienced feelings with which everyone is familiar. However, the main purpose of dealing with the concept of zeal in this book is to reveal some obvious differences between zeal as experienced in society at large and the zeal the Qur'an communicates to man.

Zeal, in general terms, is used to express enthusiastic interest and devotion to a cause, and sincere diligence in accomplishing it. Whether important or insignificant, everyone has causes he eagerly embraces throughout his life. Enthusiasm often directed toward materialistic benefits, also surfaces when worldly passions are the issue. Some people exert efforts to be rich, to have a brilliant career or a prestigious position, while others try to appear superior or to earn prestige, respect and praise. For example, everyone is familiar with the determination a high school student shows to pass a college admission test, the enthusiasm of a person hired for a desired position in a company, or the ambition and effort exerted for a business deal which is expected to be profitable. There is one strikingly common feature to all these – enthusiasm produces a distinctive and strong character in a person which would be unlikely to appear in the absence of zeal. Risks one never dared to run under normal conditions may well be taken to realize a goal. An unprecedented self-sacrificing manner is adopted without hesitation. Indeed, a person may ultimately attain considerable power in both the material and spiritual sense by employing his knowledge and capabilities to the full extent.

However, the zeal of most people is not long-lived because it lacks strong grounds. Often there is no particular goal, which would sustain their zeal under all circumstances and give them strength. The only people who never lose the enthusiasm in their hearts throughout their lives are believers because the source of their zeal is faith in Allah and their major goal is earning the good pleasure of Allah, His mercy and His Paradise.

Before proceeding with this subject, it would be useful to define the concept of zeal prevailing in ignorant societies, where people do not know the Qur'an or live by it.

THE CONCEPT OF ZEAL IN A SOCIETY OF IGNORANCE

Who belongs to a society of ignorance?

Ignorance is usually understood as being uneducated and uncultured. However, the ignorant people depicted throughout this book are those who are ignorant about the religion of Islam, about the infinite might and attributes of Allah who created them, and about the Qur'an that has been revealed to mankind. Such people live according to information imposed on them by a society full of misconceptions rather than facts revealed in the Qur'an. Allah defines people of ignorance as those **"whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware."**⁴

The lives of people who are unaware of the Qur'an and have no knowledge of the real nature of worldly life, the truth about death, and the after-death experiences of Hell and Paradise are compatible with their ignorance. Consequently, the matters that make them feel happy, eager and excited are based upon flawed and erroneous beliefs.

People of ignorance are enthusiastic only about worldly goals

"...Those who took their religion as distraction and amusement and whom the worldly life deluded."⁵

As the verse suggests, people in a society of ignorance are greatly deluded about the life of this world. Despite being aware of its brief and imperfect nature, they prefer this temporary life to an eternal life in the Hereafter because they expect to obtain worldly benefits more easily and harbor doubts about the existence of the next world. This erroneous rationale assumes that the world is within easy reach, while the Hereafter is far away.

It is, no doubt, a very shallow and irrational kind of reasoning. After all, man's life in this world is confined to a very brief period of time. A lifespan lasting six or seven decades, half of which is spent in childhood and the advanced years of old age, is indisputably brief compared to the eternal life of the Hereafter. Furthermore, even before the completion of those six or seven decades, one may die for some reason. At any moment he may find his life, which he assumed to be well in his hands, suddenly taken away, and may, at an utterly unexpected time, find himself entering his eternal life in the Hereafter, although he had assumed it to be very distant.

The heedless people of ignorance strive to make the most of their worldly lives during this short period rather than earning Allah's acceptance and His reward of Paradise. Consequently, the issues over which these people show zeal are limited to the minor goals pertaining to this world. In fact, the feelings they imagine to be enthusiasm and excitement are nothing but greed. Passionately attached to this life, they feel great excitement towards everything from which they expect to derive benefit and consequently, better living conditions. Accordingly, people feel a great desire to become wealthy or to have a prestigious status or career. In order to attain such a goal they make all forms of self-sacrifice and willingly endure every hardship.

⁴ *Surah Yaseen*, 36:6

⁵ *Surah al-A'raf*, 7:51.

The daily lives of these people abound with incidents that reveal their understanding of zeal. For example, to earn a prestigious diploma, which would bring him recognition, a student may immerse himself in books for years. Aware that this is conducive to success, he willingly spends sleepless nights and avoids socializing, if necessary. A typical day begins for him with an early morning commute and is spent in tremendous effort, which he endures with pleasure. Yet, he would decline to make the same sacrifice to help a friend since it brings him no perceivable worldly gain. What is underlined here is that although the majority of people know how to accomplish a task with zeal and enthusiasm, they will undertake it only if it serves their own interests. They do not demonstrate the same ambition for something that would earn them the pleasure of Allah, and show indifference if a worldly benefit is not forthcoming.

The mentality peculiar to ignorance, which is based only on worldly benefits, can be portrayed with the following example. An executive whose company is on the edge of bankruptcy devotes all his energy, wisdom, means and time to work out the problem. But his employee does not feel the same eagerness to save the company and thus is unlikely to find a good solution because he is not the person who will suffer direct loss when the company goes bankrupt. As seen, worldly benefits generally underlie the zeal and determination felt by members of ignorant societies. The extent of benefit is often indicative of the degree of ambition felt.

The excitement of its members is but a temporary desire

The concept of zeal peculiar to a society of ignorance is apparent in the fleeting nature of worldly enthusiasm. People may experience a burst of interest and eagerness towards a certain issue and then one day lose these feelings abruptly. In a society of ignorance almost everyone has launched numerous projects enthusiastically. Yet, they quit after a short while simply because of boredom and unwillingness to continue. For example, most of those who desire to play a musical instrument soon lose interest and quit their courses. Someone who is eager to help the needy and immediately begins charity work may, before long, lose his zeal and stop the work. Because such people do not really commit themselves to noble ideals, helping the poor, doing good deeds or broadening one's horizons in any given subject prove to be only passing whims. Living through the day, being able to meet their immediate needs, and earning the appreciation of other people are often enough to satisfy these people. Nothing beyond that point seems meaningful to them. This being the case, they may occasionally give attention to some issues which are unrelated to their own needs and concerns, but after a short while their interest is overcome by boredom and monotony.

As long as a person believes his efforts will bring him good and benefit, his zeal and enthusiasm never abate. Yet none of the aims pursued by one who turns his back on the Hereafter is worthy of continuous zeal. Encountering the slightest difficulty, failure or criticism, he may suddenly feel tired and daunted and abandon his goal. Additionally, he may fall into despair. Negative thoughts such as, **"I took great pains to accomplish it but failed"** draw him into pessimism and dampen his enthusiasm.

A person who for years had the ambition to become an architect may suddenly lose it once he encounters difficulties in his drawing projects. Or a person interested in painting may lose all his interest after a couple of tries. Often, the commitment of those who engage in voluntary work with aid

organizations is praised in newspapers and among friends. The pleasure derived from doing charity work and the good feeling such voluntary work produces may draw other people. However, those who engage in such charity work to earn prestige in society may lose their interest after some time, and the only way to keep their enthusiasm is to make their efforts known to the public and praise them. That is, they have to receive a benefit, even a psychological one; otherwise, even getting up early on weekends seems difficult and becomes a reason to quit such activities.

Believers, however, who consider engaging in good deeds and helping people a means to attain the good pleasure of Allah, never lose their enthusiasm. Encountering difficulties will not make them abandon their ideals. On the contrary, aware that in the face of difficulties such work becomes more precious in the sight of Allah, they derive more pleasure and feel more enthusiastic about it.

THE ENTHUSIASM OF BELIEVERS

The source of believers' enthusiasm: their faith, love and devotion to Allah

Believers' enthusiasm and ardor are very different from the concept prevalent in the society of ignorance, which is based on vested interests. The love believer's feel for Allah and their devotion to Him account for this. They do not feel attached to the life of this world like the members of the ignorant society, but to Allah, the all-Merciful, who created them from nothing and provided them with means. The most important reason for this is that believers evaluate events with clear consciousness. They are aware that Allah sustains one's life at every moment, that He protects every being, and that all creatures are dependent on Him. Due to their love and devotion to Allah, they strive to earn His acceptance throughout their lives. The desire to earn the pleasure of Allah is the most important source of enthusiasm and joy for believers. Aspiration for earning His approval and attaining Paradise inspires infinite energy and enthusiasm in believers.

Believers' enthusiasm is non-abating

"The believers are only the ones who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and then doubt not but strive with their properties and their lives in the cause of Allah. It is those who are the truthful."⁶

This description reveals the enthusiasm believer's harbor in their hearts. It is so because no matter what, the unyielding struggle to uphold their values lasts for a lifetime and is only sustained with an enthusiasm that faith grants to man. The merit of the believers' steadfastness in their struggle and the value of their continuous efforts are also stated by Prophet Muhammad (saas): **"The most beloved deeds to Allah are those done regularly."**⁷

Another factor keeping believers' enthusiasm strong and fresh is the mood of apprehension combined with longing in their hearts, which they experience throughout their lives:

"And invoke Him in fear and aspiration. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good."⁸

The meaning of "in fear and aspiration" is the following: Believers can never be completely sure whether or not Allah is pleased with them, and whether or not they have displayed the moral conduct which would make them worthy of Paradise. For this reason they fear Allah's punishment and constantly strive to perfect their morals. Meanwhile, they know that through zeal and sincerity, they will do their best to earn the approval of Allah, His love and His mercy. They experience fear and hope

⁶ *Surah al-Hujurat*, 49:15.

⁷ Narrated by al-Bukhari

⁸ *Surah al-A'raf*, 7:56

simultaneously; they work hard but never find their efforts sufficient and never consider themselves perfect, as confirmed in the verse:

"They fear their Lord and are afraid of the evil of [their] account."⁹

Therefore, they embrace Allah's religion with great zeal and make great efforts for its cause. Their fear of Allah prevents them from becoming weak-hearted or growing heedless, and this mood upholds their zeal. Knowing that Allah gives glad tidings of Paradise to those who have faith and do good deeds encourages them further and adds to their commitment.

As seen, a believer's concept of zeal is completely different from that of a society of ignorance. Compared to the temporary enthusiasms of disbelievers, believers' zeal is a never-ending exuberance nourished by faith in Allah. He has given believers glad tidings of the result of continuous zeal in the Qur'an:

"And give good tidings to the believers that they will have from Allah great bounty."¹⁰

They are foremost in good deeds

Not every person's faith and devotion to Allah is the same. Allah has stated that in respect to their faith, believers are of various degrees:

"Then We caused to inherit the Book those We have chosen of Our servants; and among them is he who wrongs himself [i.e., sins], and among them is he who is moderate, and among them is he who is foremost in good deeds by permission of Allah. That is what is the great bounty."¹¹

What gives strength to those who are "foremost" is undoubtedly their devotion to Allah and humility before Him. Their sincere faith gives them strong zeal to compete in earning the approval of Allah. In the Qur'an it states that those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons will be granted high status in the sight of Allah:

"Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] – other than the disabled – and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives. Allah has preferred those who strive through their wealth and their lives over those who remain inactive, by degrees. And to all Allah has promised the best [reward]. But Allah has preferred those who strive over those who remain inactive with a great reward – degrees [of high position] from Him and forgiveness and mercy. And Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful."¹²

⁹ *Surah ar-Ra'd*, 13:21

¹⁰ *Surah al-Ahzab*, 33:47

¹¹ *Surah Fatir*, 35:32

¹² *Surah an-Nisa'*, 4:95-96.

Those who are "moderate" are the ones who prefer keeping to a middle course over striving hard with their hearts and souls to earn the pleasure of Allah. No doubt, their condition in the Hereafter will not be same as those who are foremost in good deeds.

In addition, Allah has mentioned a third group among Muslims: those who lag behind in terms of their zeal.

"And indeed, there is among you he who lingers behind."¹³

As stated in the previously quoted verse from Sarah Fair, such people wrong themselves, and their state in the Hereafter will reflect the difference. While those foremost in good deeds will earn the highest status in the sight of Allah, those who remain indifferent and hang back will see their labor lost unless they repent and compensate for their neglect. Two verses from the Qur'an can be cited as an example of each state:

"The ones who have believed, emigrated and striven in the cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives are greater in rank in the sight of Allah. And it is those who are the attainers [of success]."¹⁴

"Those did not [truly] believe, so Allah has rendered their deeds worthless, and that is ever, for Allah, easy."¹⁵

¹³ *Surah an-Nisa'*, 4:72

¹⁴ *Surah at-Tawbah*, 9:20

¹⁵ *Surah al-Ahzab*, 33:19

THE EFFORTS OF SATAN TO BREAK THE ENTHUSIASM OF BELIEVERS

In the preceding pages it was stated that the believer's enthusiasm never abates and always remains fresh and strong and that the source of continuity and steadfastness of a believer's zeal is sincere faith. Therefore, Satan exerts an all-out struggle to weaken believers' determination and shake their zeal and enthusiasm. The goal of Satan in this world is to deceive people and lead them to destruction by whispering suggestions. The evil mission of Satan is related in the Qur'an in his own words:

"And I will mislead them, and I will arouse in them [sinful] desires."¹⁶

Satan approaches believers in various ways, as he does with all people, and tries to make good things appear to be wrong. Portraying some issues as insolvable, Satan aims to turn men back and prevent them from completing their beneficial works. He tries to instill hopelessness in them by presenting their tasks as difficult, and he tempts them into negligence, encourages them to procrastinate and wants them to show weak will. However, the Qur'an stresses that all the efforts of Satan and his schemes are weak:

"He [i.e., Satan] promises them and arouses [sinful] desire in them. But Satan does not promise them except delusion."¹⁷

"Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak."¹⁸

Those the Qur'an describes as people who lack a complete faith can easily fall into the trap of Satan since they do not exercise wisdom and conscience. Such people claim that they have faith but never feel it deep in their hearts. The call of Satan and the lifestyle to which he invites seems alluring to them, and thus they follow it gladly and willingly. As always, however, Satan only calls people to delusion and Hellfire, the eternal abode of punishment. True believers know well that the scheming of Satan is inherently weak and are also aware of the kind of scheming Satan employs when approaching them. They know ways to defeat him and never allow Satan to break their zeal since they shape their lives according to Qur'anic teachings. The resolute and sincere attitude of believers is encouraged as follows:

"And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is Hearing and Knowing. Indeed, those who fear Allah – when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember [Him] and at once they have insight."¹⁹

¹⁶ *Surah an-Nisa'*, 4:119.

¹⁷ *Surah an-Nisa'*, 4:120

¹⁸ *Surah an-Nisa'*, 4:76

¹⁹ *Surah al-A'raf*, 7:200-201

Believers ask Allah's protection from all harms and thus do not come under the influence of Satan's whisperings prompting them to laziness and carelessness. An example of a believer's prayer and refuge in Allah is evident in a supplication of Prophet Muhammad (saas): **"O Allah, I seek Your protection from distress and grief, from failure and laziness, and from the burden of debt and from being overcome by men."**²⁰

²⁰ Narrated by al-Bukhari, and Muslim.

THE KINDS OF BEHAVIOR THAT REVEAL THE ZEAL OF BELIEVERS

The superiority of a person who harbors enthusiastic faith in his heart is recognized in every moment he spends, every attitude he assumes, and every word he utters. It generates such perfection in one's conduct that other believers bearing the same zeal in their hearts immediately recognize the enthusiasm resulting from faith and devotion to Allah. Disbelievers also notice the enthusiasm, commitment and spiritual power of believers. Yet, they can never figure out the source of this commitment and exuberance since they do not acknowledge the true religion or know how to be attached to Allah alone. Despite the fact that disbelievers cannot pinpoint its source, they do notice the kind of daring and brave character of believers which is not seen in other people.

The kinds of behavior that indicate zeal is of great significance to believers since it is impossible to exercise decisive judgement about the profoundness of another's faith and his closeness to Allah. Only Allah knows for certain those with deep faith from those with hypocrisy in their hearts, but He has provided a yardstick, which is the zeal and ardor in believers to attain Allah's acceptance and to live by His, religion. In this way one can easily identify those with true faith who have devoted themselves to Allah. Similarly, he will notice the weaknesses of people whose indifference is strikingly obvious when compared with a believer's enthusiasm, just, as he is able to discern the strong and reliable ones among the believers. Believers are thus enabled to seize the opportunity to reinforce and strengthen the faith of those people having a poor level of enthusiasm.

Loyalty to Allah until the end of their lives

Throughout their lives people encounter various opportunities which bring them material or psychological benefits. When they find such an opportunity, most people abandon anything they deemed important until then, even dear friends, with the hope of gaining an advantage. The goals they had enthusiastically embraced may suddenly seem meaningless for them – the very goals they had pledged not to abandon no matter what the circumstances. A lack of true loyalty accounts for this inconsistent attitude.

The only ones who live faithfulness in its true sense are the people who believe in Allah and commit themselves to remain faithful to Him. They know that nothing on earth can be more precious than earning the acceptance and good pleasure of Allah because they have grasped that the only one worthy of true devotion is Allah, the Almighty. The commitment of believers is described in the Qur'an as follows:

"Among the believers are men true to what they promised Allah. Among them is he who has fulfilled his vow, and among them is he who awaits [his chance]. And they did not alter [the terms of their commitment] by any alteration."²¹

"[They are] those who fulfill the covenant of Allah and do not break the contract."²²

²¹ *Surah al-Ahzab*, 33:23.

The believers' devotion to Allah is evident in how eagerly they are committed to Islam. Indeed, no worldly benefit, no material or other interest can in any way tempt them away from their devotion and loyalty to Allah. And nothing is more alluring to them than earning the approval of Allah. Their devotion inspires them to continually work for the religion and to do good deeds with zeal, as encouraged by Allah in the Qur'an:

Say, "Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds."²³

And Allah gives glad tidings that He will reward the faithful:

"...That Allah may reward the truthful for their truth and punish the hypocrites if He wills or accept their repentance. Indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful."²⁴

Seeking the kinds of deeds that most please Allah

Through the Qur'an's verses Allah has communicated to people the kind of morals and way of living with which He is pleased. It is only believers who comply with Allah's command in the best way. Even when they have knowledge of it, most people neglect the lifestyle with which Allah is pleased because they lack the goal of pleasing Him. On the other hand, believers try to abide by every verse in the Qur'an attentively and not make concessions in this matter. Even when they meet a situation contrary to their worldly inclinations, they do not show the slightest intimidation; rather, they fulfill the most difficult tasks with great zeal throughout their lives.

Indicative of believers' eagerness for Allah's acceptance is their pursuit of what pleases Allah most. When a believer encounters several options, he chooses the one, which he expects Allah would like best. He bases his decisions on criteria established by the Qur'an, the sunnah and then his conscience. In the Qur'an, Allah has informed believers of the most acceptable way to live in His sight and described to them the mode of behavior that most pleases Him. Thereafter throughout their lives, believers are guided by the conscience that constantly suggests the best and most righteous course of action. Among a range of options, conscience directs man to the right path based on knowledge from the Qur'an.

The following exemplifies Allah's guidance in the matter:

"And tell my servants to say that which is best."²⁵

Allah commands people to say "that which is best" to one another. Saying a kind word is an act that earns Allah's approval. However, saying "that which is best" is what earns the most of Allah's approval and increases His reward because Allah informs us that it is a most acceptable deed.

²² *Surah ar-Ra'd*, 13:20.

²³ *Surah al-An'am*, 6:162.

²⁴ *Surah al-Ahzab*, 33:24.

²⁵ *Surah al-Isra'*, 17:53.

Similarly, Allah states in the Qur'an that a misdeed may be countered with one equivalent to it. However, He also draws attention to the fact that forgiving and displaying an exemplary attitude to improve the morality of the offender is better:

"And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation – his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers."²⁶

As the verse informs, repaying an evil act with one equivalent to it is a manner that conforms to Allah's law. However, forgiving is the manner that is more acceptable and leads a person to earn the most of Allah's pleasure. In a situation where one is able to exact his right, managing to control rage and forgiving an offender is the mark of moral perfection. That is because the person refuses to obey the wishes of his baser self and displays noble patience only to earn the good pleasure of Allah. As the following verse states:

"And whoever is patient and forgives – indeed, that is of the matters [requiring] determination."²⁷

The difference with zealous people is recognized from their undaunted and unyielding choice of the best manner. No matter what the circumstance, they show determination to do what most pleases Allah. In return Allah gives them glad tidings that He will guide them to salvation:

"By it [i.e., the Qur'an] Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darkness into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path."²⁸

Preference of the religion's interests to their own

As mentioned earlier, the majority of people in ignorant societies try to derive benefit from the society they live in through their personal relations and even from their closest friends. In case a conflict of interests arises, they never hesitate to put their own interests first and, in the blink of an eye can readily sacrifice people they hold dear. That is because they prefer themselves to anything and everyone.

However, the situation is different for believers. They do not set primarily individual goals and thus do not concentrate only on personal interests but consider the interests of other believers and of Islam. Indeed, when the interests of believers and Islam are observed, their own interests are likewise observed. They are not overcome by worldly concerns, but what is most important to them in this life is to attain a mode of behavior which most pleases Allah because that is what will be of real use to them in both this world and the next. Those who have this type of mentality always work for the benefit of Islam with great zeal.

²⁶ *Surah ash-Shura*, 42:40.

²⁷ *Surah ash-Shura*, 42:43.

²⁸ *Surah al-Ma'idah*, 5:16

At this point it would be useful to clarify what is "the interest" of Islam. Allah revealed His religion to all people as a guide upon the path of truth. Communicating to people the beliefs and practices of the religion and the happiness its morality brings combined with all its spiritual and material benefits is an obligation upon all believers. They fulfill this obligation both by being role models living by the principles of the Qur'an and by communicating it to people in word or disseminating relevant publications. A believer considers calling even a single person to eternal salvation an important form of worship. This is a main aspect of "the interest" of Islam. In areas related to the attainment of social and individual peace and prevention of immorality, misery and injustice, believers put their own interests aside. This approach is inferred from one of Prophet Muhammad's (saas) sayings: **"None of you believes until his desire is in accordance with what I have brought."**²⁹

In such situations believers may even renounce their rights on occasion. When confronting a sincere preference for another over one's self, some people might entertain misconceptions; they may define this attitude of believers as "foolishness." There are some who think according to the conditioning of society and will say, **"Are you the ones who will save the world?"** However, contrary to what they imagine, believers do not really give up personal benefit for a worldly cause; they expect the rewards of their sacrifices from their Lord. For this reason they eagerly render services for Islam, communicate good morals and invite people to eternal salvation. Allah gives glad tidings that in return for their eager determination He will grant them much better and higher rewards. Consequently, a person who sets personal interests aside and observes the interest of religion actually gains the best benefits possible, both in this world and beyond. That is because through his zealous efforts he attains both the good pleasure of Allah and a good life in this world. Of this Allah states the following:

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer – We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do."³⁰

It is possible to observe the behavior of believers in the course of their daily lives. For instance, a believer does not hesitate to set a profitable business aside to engage in another task without worldly returns if he believes it will please Allah more. Similarly, he may readily give money which he had saved to finance a charity project designed to communicate the moral values of the Qur'an to people. As the examples reveal, a zealous believer immediately sets his personal interests aside and gives himself up to the service of religion without any hesitation.

A person's incentive to renounce his rights in certain situations is related to his awareness that what he does is a great gain for him rather than a loss. He may ignore a profitable deal and even incur a considerable material loss; however, he will attain something over and above all that: the approval of Allah. Besides, a believer knows that the one who gives and withholds possessions is Allah. The one who provides his sustenance, bestows abundance, and increases his earnings is Allah; therefore, it is useless to be greedy or to worry about consequences. Allah declares that in return for their good morals and zealous efforts, believers will obtain additional abundance:

²⁹ *An-Nawawis Forty Hadith*, no. 41.

³⁰ *Surah an-Nahl*, 16:97.

"For them who have done good is the best [reward] – and extra."³¹

Preferring the interests of Islam to personal ones is not limited to material issues. There might be cause to make bodily sacrifices as well. For instance, services may be needed when one feels exhausted, hungry or unwell. At such times, believers continue to offer their services without hanging back or showing any indolence. That is because they consider material or physical sacrifice not as a difficulty but a special opportunity created for them by Allah. These are immediate opportunities awaited by believers who strongly desire to feel close to Allah and to earn His consent. For this reason, without feeling the slightest distress, they turn towards the most beneficial duty. No doubt, the zeal and determination they show are indications of their faith and sincerity.

Commitment to live good morals

One who aims to attain the good pleasure of Allah in the life of this world will show great determination to live the good morals with which Allah is pleased. Those who do not have a sincere faith in Allah and who are not eager to earn His pleasure will find it burdensome. That is because good morals entail a perfect exercise of conscience and will. Those who do not have the zeal and fervor of faith in their hearts fail to show sensitivity of conscience and will. Consequently, they fail to show good morals in the true sense.

Believers who embrace religion enthusiastically, on the other hand, willingly live by the moral principles described in the Qur'an and derive pleasure from it. At times they may face tempting situations, but when they refuse to follow their baser instincts, they feel great pleasure in this accomplishment and in being committed to good morals. They often encounter difficulties and problems yet display a brave and daring character.

Against an aggressive attitude likely to arouse anger, they show patience and restrain themselves. They repay a bad deed with a good one. When treated unjustly, they prefer to be generous and forgive, even though they are in the right. Throughout the most difficult and distressing situations they willingly forego their own preferences, giving priority to the wishes of other people and taking pleasure in making sacrifices for other believers. When they realize that they have made a mistake, they put forth-sincere effort to rectify the situation. Although they might be in need themselves, they give to orphans, to the poor, to the wayfarer and to those who ask in compliance with the command of Allah. They always exercise justice and display an honest attitude when they testify, even when against their own interests. They neither spy on each other nor backbite one another. Above all, they are committed to live by the values of the Qur'an until their last breath.

Only the zeal of faith grants a person the ability to live by the good values of the Qur'an. The commitment of believers to good values shows the depth of their faith. There are indeed moments when Muslims struggle with the desires of their lower selves and when they are tempted by Satan. However, despite everything, Allah's conscientious servants show determination to live by the moral values that will please Allah due to their devotion to Him and their aspiration to be close to Him.

³¹ *Surah Yunus*, 10:26.

Submission of themselves and their wealth to Allah

Wealth and self are two concepts to which the ignorant society attaches great importance. In fact for many, they are practically the sole purpose of existence. Throughout their lives people strive to attain a status through which they can be respected and gain superiority. In the Qur'an, Allah draws attention to the fact that hoarding wealth and being esteemed in society are the passions of many ignorant people:

"Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire – of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return [i.e., Paradise]."³²

In another verse Allah informs us that wealth and status are but trials:

"You will surely be tested in your possessions and in yourselves."³³

With unquenchable desire in their hearts, people in ignorant societies aspire to wealth. Their greatest fear is harm to their possessions or something of which they are proud because the damage affects their main purpose in life. For this reason they dedicate everything to the protection of their wealth and themselves and the furtherance of their worldly interests. Their view that the life of this world, its possessions and its alluring pleasures are more valuable than Allah's acceptance of them accounts for such an attitude.

Believers, on the other hand, immediately set aside the material benefits (to which people of ignorance dedicate their lives) in order to earn the good pleasure of Allah and Paradise. They are aware that they are being tested through their possessions and their selves and that Allah is the real owner of favors granted in this world. As a matter of fact, Allah may well take back what He has entrusted at any time He wills because Allah holds absolute control over everything in the universe.

The "self" of a man, which is his body, will ultimately undergo a rapid process of deterioration after six or seven decades and his possessions will bring him no benefits in the Hereafter. But when a person uses his means for Allah's cause, he will meet contentment both in this world and beyond. Believers submit themselves to Allah, and it is the zeal in their hearts that makes submission possible. In the Qur'an their state is related as follows:

"Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise."³⁴

The verse concludes:

³² *Surah ali 'Imran*, 3:14.

³³ *Surah ali 'Imran*, 3:186.

³⁴ *Surah at-Tawbah*, 9:111.

"So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment."³⁵

This reminder allows believers to continually experience happiness and zeal in their hearts. When required, they eagerly spend their wealth for a good purpose in return for the pleasure of Allah. They use their selves (bodies) to render services to the religion and do good deeds for the approval of Allah. No doubt, they are aware that at times their properties and lives may be in danger, but they accept that willingly for they consider it a gain rather than a loss. In the Qur'an, Allah instructs believers to encounter every difficulty with acceptance and willingness:

"Say, 'Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector.' And upon Allah let the believers rely."³⁶

The Qur'an also narrates an incident showing how zealously believers submitted their wealth and life to Allah. A group of believers at the time of Prophet Muhammad (saas) sincerely desired to fight for the cause of Allah but circumstances prevented them. Allah appreciated their sincerity and excused them:

"There is no blame upon those who, when they came to you that you might give them mounts, you said, 'I can find nothing for you to ride upon.' They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend."³⁷

This is an evident indication of how a sincere believer desires to use his property and life for the cause of Allah and the kind of zeal he feels for this cause. No doubt, the type of service a believer may render will change according to time and situation. At the time of Prophet Muhammad (saas) a struggle had to be waged to protect the rights of believers. In our day Muslims need to strive in intellectual realms and serve in scholarly fields.

Every person who makes serious sacrifices to live by the values of the Qur'an and communicate its beauties to others can expect a reward from his Lord. The reward of those who spend their time and possessions in this world for the cause of Allah is confirmed in the Qur'an as follows:

"Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He will multiply it for him and he will have a noble reward?"³⁸

Competition in righteousness

"They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good deeds. And those are among the righteous."³⁹

³⁵ *Surah at-Tawbah*, 9:111.

³⁶ *Surah at-Tawbah*, 9:51.

³⁷ *Surah at-Tawbah*, 9:92.

³⁸ *Surah al-Hadeed*, 57:11.

³⁹ *Surah a li Imran*, 3:114.

"So race to [all that is] good."⁴⁰

Allah commands believers to compete with one another in doing good deeds. This competition, however, is not the sort of race engaged in ignorant societies for the purpose of defeating others. On the contrary, it is a race for the proliferation of virtues and good deeds. The intent of believers to compete is not to derive worldly gain or to establish superiority over other people. Rather, they race to comply with Allah's commands, to live the values with which Allah is pleased, and to attain the approval of Allah. Their engagement in such competition is a manifestation of their fear of Allah and their faith. Indeed, the efforts a person puts forth serve as a reliable measure of his sincerity and commitment. He wants Allah to be satisfied with him, to have mercy on him, and to deem him worthy of His Paradise, so he puts forth an all-out effort. Exercising his reason, conscience and physical ability to the full, he strives to live by the Qur'an in the most perfect way possible. Indeed, Allah informs us that it is their sincere effort and striving that renders believers foremost in the sight of Allah.

"It is those who hasten to good deeds, and they outstrip [others] therein."⁴¹

The attitude of Prophet Zakariyya is given as an example:

"So We responded to him, and We gave to him Yahya, and amended for him his wife. Indeed, they used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive."⁴²

Here, Allah has drawn attention to the fact that to hasten to good deeds is also an attribute peculiar to prophets. Throughout their lives the prophets strove to win the consent of Allah, so believers who look to prophets as role models follow in their footsteps.

Another reason believers race to do good is that they are aware that the life of this world is very short and that death is near. They know death can come upon them at any moment and that then they will feel great regret for not having made adequate efforts toward the good pleasure of Allah. For once a person enters the Hereafter, it is no longer possible to return to the previous world and compete in doing good deeds. Thus, believers race against time to do more and more during the term granted to them in this world. They enthusiastically seize every opportunity to perform a good deed. A prayer of sincere believers is cited in the Qur'an as follows:

"[They are] those who say, 'Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us for the righteous an example.'"⁴³

⁴⁰ *Surah al-Ma'idah*, 5:48.

⁴¹ *Surah al-Mu'minun*, 23:61.

⁴² *Surah al-Anbiya'*, 21:90.

⁴³ *Surah al-Furqan*, 25:74.

With such zeal and determination believers fulfill the command of Allah:

"So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for more]. And to your Lord direct [your] longing."⁴⁴

They waste not a moment and hasten to do well with great ardor, knowing that man can never consider his efforts sufficient. They never forget that they will have to give an account of every second lived in this world and that they will be held responsible for every second during which they failed to exercise conscience or indulged in trivial activities when they could have done better things. Beyond the time required for basic personal needs, they engage in a constant search for better things to accomplish.

Aware that physical and mental exertion for the cause of Allah brings great reward, they never consider exhaustion disturbing as does the society of ignorance. They see this as an important opportunity for their benefit in the Hereafter, and as soon as their work is completed, they eagerly proceed to another task to please Allah. It is stated in the Qur'an:

"But whoever desires the Hereafter and exerts the effort due to it while he is a believer – it is those whose effort is ever appreciated [by Allah]."⁴⁵

In return for their steady efforts and commitment to do good, His faithful servants will be hosted by Allah in the most beautiful mansions and enjoy great blessings for all eternity:

"And the forerunners, the forerunners – those are the ones brought near [to Allah] in the Gardens of Pleasure, a [large] company of the former peoples and a few of the later peoples, on thrones woven [with ornament], reclining on them, facing each other."⁴⁶

Allah has given glad tidings that those who tire themselves in the life of this world for the consent of Allah will feel no weariness in the Hereafter:

"No fatigue will touch them therein, nor from it will they [ever] be removed."⁴⁷

"[It is Allah] who has settled us in the home of duration [i.e., Paradise] out of His bounty. There touches us not in it any fatigue, and there touches us not in it weariness [of mind]."⁴⁸

Remaining patient in the face of difficulties

In the Qur'an, Allah has described Himself as:

⁴⁴ *Surah al Inshirah* 94:7-8.

⁴⁵ *Surah al-Isra'*, 17:19.

⁴⁶ *Surah al-Waqi'ah*, 56:10-16.

⁴⁷ *Surah al-hijr*, 15:48.

⁴⁸ *Surah Fatir*, 35:35.

"The one who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed."⁴⁹

He draws attention to the fact that the life of this world is a time for testing. Indeed, events which appear to be favorable or unfavorable in the course of this life are critical in terms of revealing a person's actual character. Calamities, in particular, serve to reveal the degree of a person's sincerity.

One of the most noticeable qualities of believers is their stable character. In times of prosperity and hardship alike, they display the same sincerity and enthusiasm. Their unique perception of the concept of "difficulty" accounts for this, for they consider times of difficulty as opportunities by which they can prove their devotion to Allah and the strength of their faith. They acknowledge that they are special situations created by Allah to discriminate between "those in whose hearts is a disease" and "those who are sincere in faith to Him." In the face of all they encounter, they show forbearance and put their trust in Allah in compliance with His words:

"So be patient with gracious patience."⁵⁰

The Qur'an also states:

"Allah does not charge a soul except [within] its capacity. It will have whatever [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] whatever [evil] it has earned."⁵¹

Believers feel the security and comfort of knowing that Allah does not impose on them more than they can bear. In the face of an ordeal they remember that this is an incident they will manage to overcome, and therefore they meet it with patience. Thus, no matter how trying an ordeal may be, they earnestly strive while displaying a submissive attitude to Allah.

In addition, they know that ordeals befell believers in the past and that the trials people of the past encountered will come to them as well. A believer aware of this fact is prepared long before he actually encounters difficulties; he has determined that he will remain loyal to his Lord and is thus committed to display patience and submission and put his trust in Allah under all circumstances.

"And they had already promised Allah before not to turn their backs. And ever is the promise to Allah [that about which one will be] questioned."⁵²

A believer fulfills his commitment to Allah. He faces hunger, poverty, fear, injury or death with steadiness, accepts them and shows a thankful attitude towards his Lord. Even if innumerable difficulties should come upon him one after another and his entire life is spent in hardship, he knows that when he accepts difficulties in this life (lasting but a few decades) with good patience for Allah, he will experience no difficulty throughout eternity – not for a single moment. His earnest behavior will, by

⁴⁹ *Surah al-Mulk*, 67:2.

⁵⁰ *Surah al-Ma'arij*, 70:5.

⁵¹ *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2:286.

⁵² *Surah al-Ahzab*, 33:15.

Allah's will, earn him the most beautiful blessings: the pleasure and mercy of Allah and His Paradise. This good news is given in the Qur'an:

"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient."⁵³

There is a final point to be kept in mind. The way believers face difficulties with patience is different from the ignorant person's understanding of patience, which is simply to endure. Believers' understanding, however, is not only "endurance" but facing the problems that one must solve and overcome. Therefore, believers do their best to provide solutions by exercising their reason and resorting to all material and physical means. While doing so, they pray to Allah to give them strength and relief:

"Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people."⁵⁴

It is indeed this attitude in the face of hardship – sincere efforts coupled with acceptance – which reveals genuine zeal. The strength of their faith in Allah and the Hereafter enables believers to struggle hard against difficulties without ever feeling weak-hearted.

Becoming more zealous in the face of hardships

It has been stated that among the most important signs of faith and zeal is the attitude believers assume in the face of hardships. Another sign revealing believers' faith in difficult times is that they never become weak-hearted. On the contrary, when they face hardships, their zeal grows even stronger, for people cannot attain Paradise unless they are tested by difficulties, as were the people of past generations.

"Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you?"⁵⁵

Therefore, a believer's encounter with problems and hardships is inevitable and is a requisite of religion. To put it another way, these tests determine important attributes of believers and give indications of their being on the right path.

Conducting oneself in compliance with Qur'anic verses in the face of difficulties makes a person someone with whom Allah is content. This being the case, it is a believer's will to face hardships, as did the prophets, their companions and all true believers who lived throughout history. With excitement and joy they await the moment Allah's promise will be fulfilled. Being tested with similar difficulties means

⁵³ Surah *al-Baqarah*, 2:155.

⁵⁴ Surah *al-Baqarah*, 2:286.

⁵⁵ Surah *al-Baqarah*, 2:214.

that they are following in the prophets' footsteps. Surely, they do not seek out difficulties, but a hardship they encounter will add to their zeal and strength. They hope, additionally, to gain better rewards in return for hardships because they will be of those who remain loyal to Allah without falling weak-hearted and will say:

"This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and Allah and His Messenger spoke the truth."⁵⁶

Seeking Allah's approval with great joy

Another attribute of believers is the joy and happiness they feel while engaging in a deed they expect to earn them the pleasure of Allah. This is "the joy of faith." The joy of faith is a sincere, inner joy that cannot be felt by those who do not live the true religion, for it is a faith-related joy, looking forward to the pleasure of Allah, His mercy and Paradise.

Hardly ever do those whose faith in Allah and the Hereafter is dubious experience such joy. Similar to "ignorant" people they only find joy in what is related to immediate personal interest when they sense something "profitable." However, this is but a temporary joy. Once the worldly benefit is lost, joy also disappears.

Those who lack true faith in their hearts will feel frustrated if earning the pleasure of Allah calls for a task they find hard to perform. They express their reluctance and indifference by carrying out the task discontentedly. They often consider voluntary work or a free service as a waste of time, failing to appreciate that to earn the pleasure of Allah is the best and most precious of all rewards. So they only feel as if they have taken on a great responsibility or made a great sacrifice. At this point emerges the distinctive nature of a believer's enthusiasm. Whether hard or simple, a duty never frustrates a believer since he wholeheartedly, willingly and gladly renders his services to Allah. This enthusiasm manifests itself in attitudes of joy and happiness.

That believers expect their reward only from Allah is also stated by Allah's Messenger (saas). Asked what reward there would be for a man who desired fame and compensation for having served in the way of Allah, the Prophet (saas) said, "There is no reward for him." Then he said, "Allah accepts those deeds which were performed purely for His sake and which were meant to seek His pleasure."⁵⁷

Not being influenced by those in whose hearts is a disease

At the beginning of the book it was stated that people's faith and closeness to Allah are not the same and that there are some who are sincerely obedient to Allah and others in whose hearts is a disease.⁵⁸ People who do not have wholehearted faith (although they live among believers and assert that they believe) show the reality of their faith in the way they conduct themselves. They lack the zeal

⁵⁶ Surah al-Ahzab, 33:22.

⁵⁷ Abu Dawud and an-Nasai

⁵⁸ Scholars have explained this "disease" as hypocrisy or disbelief.

to live the religion and gain the good pleasure of Allah, and may even want to weaken a believer's enthusiasm and discourage him.

However, those who have real faith are not influenced by such people's words or their acts because they perceive what Allah has informed them in the Qur'an:

"So be patient. Indeed, the promise of Allah is truth. And let them not disquiet you who are not certain [in faith]."⁵⁹

The indifference of some people is actually the result of their uncertainty. Aware of this fact, believers do not feel frustrated; on the contrary, they feel more committed to struggle for the interests of Islam since other people lack responsibility for religion and put forth no effort to spread the values of the Qur'an. They become more determined to remind them of Qur'anic values and to live by the principles of Islam in the best way.

A great Islamic scholar, Said Nursi, also known as Bediüzzaman (Wonder of the Age), expressed how people who exert sincere effort for the acceptance of Allah approach unenthusiastic people: **"Weak-heartedness and the withdrawal of others becomes a cause that augments the zeal and efforts of sincere believers because they hold themselves responsible for the duties of those who have withdrawn."**⁶⁰

Bediüzzaman observed that every time sincere believers see how those in whose hearts is a disease evade the service of Islam, they embrace the religion with added commitment. The indifference of unenthusiastic people toward adhering to the values of the Qur'an and toward communicating them reminds believers of their own great responsibility. Other people's unwillingness to adopt good values becomes a cause for believers to conduct themselves even better. In contrast to the non-adherence of those who have no certainty about Allah and His messengers, believers display an exemplary obedience, which says "we hear and we obey."

Those who have not truly adopted faith in their hearts unwittingly contribute to the development of believers in many ways. In no way, however, can they instill their indifference into the hearts of believers because believers derive their zeal and faith from their relationship with Allah rather than the attitude of people surrounding them. Whether or not believers witness such people's indifference, they strive eagerly to fulfill the commands of Allah. However, observing the weak-hearted serves as a reminder which ultimately turns out to be good for them. While an indifferent person does not give much thought to his eternal life, he unconsciously augments the zeal of sincere believers and encourages them.

⁵⁹ *Surah ar-Rum*, 30:60.

⁶⁰ *Kastamonu Lahikası* p. 37.

WHAT THE BELIEVERS' ZEAL AND EXCITEMENT ARE LIKE

In societies remote from values of the Qur'an, the word "excitement" often expresses feelings of nervousness, anxiety, stress and agitation in the face of certain events. It is not a positive feeling but something distressful. The excitement of believers, on the other hand, is a feeling of ebullience experienced at the thought of Allah's artistry, of His blessings, and of the eternal life in Paradise.

Disbelievers experience feelings of distress because they do not put their trust in Allah. Putting trust in Allah means taking Allah as one's guardian and relying only upon Him. Since people of ignorance fail to appreciate the greatness of Allah, they cannot experience feelings of trust and submission. Instead of taking Allah as their protector, they expect to receive assistance from worldly sources. For this reason they can never get rid of the fears and anxieties particular to the ignorant.

Believers, however, are not afflicted with the distress found in ignorant societies thanks to the trust they place in their Lord. They are the ones who profoundly experience the excitement of faith which the Qur'an describes as an attribute of believers. That is because they are aware that every single occurrence is created for a divine purpose and so, contemplate deeply to perceive divine purposes. By exercising consciousness, they can easily see purposes hidden in the most delicate details. When compared to people of ignorance, they show more sensitivity to the very same occurrence, derive more pleasure and feel greater excitement from it. They experience zeal and excitement from knowledge that they have been created from nothing into a colorful world where hundreds of thousands, even millions of miracles exist all together at the same time. Wherever they look, they see the unique artistry of Allah: the universe, the sky, the sun, the moon, the butterflies, millions of animals, plants, fruits, etc. A believer cannot help getting excited when he envisions all these.

WHAT EXCITES BELIEVERS?

The observance of Allah's artistry in creation

Wherever man looks, he sees astonishing examples of Allah's artistry. In a Qur'anic verse Allah says:

"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?"⁶¹

Believers get excited when they notice the perfection and order Allah continuously creates in every corner of the universe. They see the wisdom, might and the unprecedented artistry behind these miracles and derive pleasure from pondering over the magnificent creation of Allah. They are amazed at people who remain insensitive towards these miracles. If such people would only listen to their conscience for a short while and think sincerely, they too would surely feel great excitement at Allah's artistry and might. As expressed in many verses of the Qur'an, the perfection in Allah's creation is so impressive that anyone who exercises consciousness can see it. In one verse it is stated that whenever believers think about the glory in Allah's creation, they feel awe:

"...Those who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], 'Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire. "⁶²

Believers who sincerely contemplate subjects which occur to their consciousness realize that the creation of the heavens and the earth is marked by eternal wisdom and power. They realize that Allah conceals hundreds and thousands of divine purposes in every creation and feel great excitement about their perfect order. Unlike the agitation peculiar to ignorant societies, it is an excitement and joy that leads man to the straight path of Allah. The consequence of this comprehension and excitement is an even stronger conviction that there is no god but Allah. The more believers think about the art and splendor created around them, the more they understand the omnipotence, wisdom and majesty of Allah, who is man's only true friend and protector. They immediately remember Him, honor Him and take refuge in Him from His punishment as stated in the verse above: **"Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire."**⁶³

⁶¹ *Surah Fussilat*, 41:53.

⁶² *Surah ali Imran*, 3:191.

⁶³ *Surah ali Imran*, 3:191.

Seeing blessings and beauties

The people who get most excited by Allah's blessings and derive the most pleasure from them are believers. They know that everything has been created by Allah and consider every incident they encounter and everything they see as a blessing from Him. For this reason a particular beauty means more to them than it does to other people.

Another reason why believers feel such intense excitement at blessings is that they notice the details and delicate points that others fail to see. Those who cannot exercise reason properly and who do not profoundly ponder over events will comprehend only their outward appearance. Therefore, the pleasure they derive from them remains limited. Believers, on the other hand, see faith-related points and divine purposes in everything they encounter. Thus, they manage to appreciate many details and blessings, which give them more pleasure and excitement.

Another reason why believers see blessings in detail and are more impressed by them is the following: A person who is arrogant against Allah cannot recognize the beauties and marvels He creates because if he acknowledges Allah's omnipotence, he must acknowledge his own imperfection. Since he finds this unacceptable, he will not see the beauties of creation in their proper perspective. Even if he notices them, he prefers to explain them away and suppress his excitement.

Free from arrogance and conceit, believers never fail to appreciate beautiful things and witness the magnificent creation of Allah, and they express inner feelings and excitement. For example, when they see a rose or a violet of eye-catching color arousing pleasure with all its beauty and attractiveness, they first realize that it is a manifestation of Allah's attribute "jameel" (beautiful). Beautiful and fascinating creations lead them to reflect upon the vastly superior and eternal beauty of the Creator. This reflection excites them greatly, for they perceive that all these beauties have been created for them and that they are a favor and gift from Allah. They experience excitement knowing that all of them are signs of Allah's love and mercy toward them. They enjoy thinking that although these beauties may not mean much to many people, they are the fortunate ones, the friends of Allah who derive the most pleasure from His blessings. They are grateful that He gave them the opportunity to see these beauties and had bestowed His favors upon them, and they experience the excitement of giving thanks to Allah.

They are happy that Allah gave them eyes to see such beauties, a clear consciousness to comprehend them and sincere faith to be grateful for them. They feel privileged, as many people do not derive pleasure from beautiful things due to spiritual blindness. But they can see and enjoy these beauties because Allah has chosen them and made them love faith. In addition, their contemplation of the variety of blessings, their perfect designs and the eternal wisdom manifested in them augments their reverence for Allah and the excitement they feel about His artistry. As Allah reminds:

"And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, mankind is most unjust and ungrateful."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ *Surah Ibraheem*, 14:34.

Thus, they are in awe of the boundless variety in the blessings of this world. With gratitude to Allah they are elated at the thought that Allah has given all these favors out of His mercy; He gave such an abundance of blessings, whereas He could have given much less. Allah said:

"If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe."⁶⁵

Remembering that Allah will add even more favors to those who are thankful is additionally pleasing.

Knowing that Allah created for them a lifetime abounding with favors and beauties and a destiny that always brings goodness invigorates them. A person of faith is aware of Allah's protection and mercy toward him every second, and that both are favors from Him. Indeed, Allah grants mercy to whom He wills, and a person leads a pleasant and happy life only because Allah has decreed it. This fact is stressed in many verses such as these:

"And your Lord creates what He wills and chooses."⁶⁶

"He brings them out from darkness into the light."⁶⁷

"And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path."⁶⁸

A believer knows that he owes the blessings he enjoys to Allah. Allah's choosing him, enabling him to live in goodness, keeping him away from evil, and creating him with particular abilities greatly excites him. With zeal he turns toward Him and strives to attain His approval through both his behavior and attitude. As he observes the beauties of this world, he thinks about Paradise, how perfect and flawless the beauties in Paradise must be, and becomes excited with the hope of attaining them. The spirit of believers is manifested in Prophet Muhammad's (saas) words, "Truly, in every glorification of Allah is a sadaqah, in every magnification of Him is a sadaqah, every praise of Him is a sadaqah, and in saying, 'There is no god but Allah' there is sadaqah."⁶⁹

What has been cited above is only a few examples of what excites believers. The scope of this book is too limited to mention all the details that believers notice. Their horizons are broad, and their power to reflect is strong. The pleasure that disbelievers can never experience is the great favor which faith grants to believers.

⁶⁵ *Surah Ibraheem*, 14:7.

⁶⁶ *Surah al-Qasas*, 28:68.

⁶⁷ *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2:257.

⁶⁸ *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2:213.

⁶⁹ Narrated by Ahmad and Muslim.

Love and friendship

A majority of people complain about not being able to find true love and companionship throughout their lives and are thoroughly convinced that it is impossible to experience them. In a sense this is true for the people in ignorant societies who never attain true love and companionship since the affection they have for one another is often advantage-ridden. As soon as they no longer find benefits to reap, the intimacy they consider to be love or friendship also ends.

The people who best experience love and friendship and live them in their truest sense are believers. The main reason, as expressed earlier in this book, is that they love one another not for benefit but only because those they love are conscientious and sincere believers. What makes a person lovable and desired as a friend is the fear of Allah and piety which makes a person live by the values of the Qur'an in the most meticulous way. One who lives by the values of the Qur'an also knows what characteristics he must possess to be worthy of friendship, and he adopts these characteristics in the most perfect way. Similarly, he can appreciate characteristics worthy of admiration in another person and can love in a true sense.

As long as this understanding persists and values of the Qur'an pervade, the excitement derived from love and friendship never abates. Furthermore, as people display more and more good morals, the pleasure and excitement they receive from love and friendship continuously increases. As they notice attributes peculiar to believers, signs of faith and conscience, sincerity, fear of Allah and piety in one another, their enthusiasm grows. They find it inspiring to be surrounded by people who are worthy of Allah's acceptance and love and are likely to attain an admirable rank in the Hereafter. Hence, they feel pleasure in making friends with people to whom Allah has granted His own companionship.

Since their love is based on an understanding of companionship which will last for all eternity, it never lessens and does not end with death. On the contrary, it extends into eternity in a more perfect form. From this aspect believers' understanding of love differs from that of the society of ignorance. The love and friendship of people of ignorance are not based on the intention of being together for all eternity, so they fail to truly practice the concepts of loyalty, faithfulness and trust. If two people who claim to be friends select a particular circumstance for their association, then it means they can put an end to their friendship at any time. Both parties' awareness of this possibility makes them conduct themselves cautiously towards one another and feel uncomfortable. Caution impairs sincerity, which is a requisite of love and friendship. In worldly relationships people always consider the possibility of the termination of their friendship and thus avoid displaying the kind of sincere attitude which could embarrass them when cordiality comes to an end.

Sincere believers, on the other hand, never conduct themselves dishonestly. A person who intends to be with another for all eternity is someone who is committed to show unceasing loyalty, love and friendship. This distinctive characteristic of believers' love and friendship, that is, willingness to be together for all eternity, lets them derive great pleasure from the affection they experience and the excitement of expecting to be with their loved ones in Paradise. There is also the pleasure of certainty that they will be loyal to their loved ones forever.

Protecting the righteous

"And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and for the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, 'Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper'?"⁷⁰

In this verse Allah draws attention to the situation of people who are oppressed and wait for a supporter or an ally. In compliance with this verse protecting innocent people who are unable to stand up for their own rights, helping them and ensuring their safety is a responsibility upon believers.

Believers aware of their responsibilities feel a great desire and eagerness to save people who are oppressed only because they believe in Allah. They have conscience and a precise understanding of justice, so they never condone the oppression of innocent people; rather, they provide them with material and moral support. For this cause their zeal and enthusiasm gives them great courage and strength.

Allah also holds believers responsible for struggling against evil and preventing it, which adds to their enthusiasm. Striving against evil, wiping out tyranny from the earth, and establishing peace and welfare are among the greatest and most honorable services that can be rendered for humanity. The importance of fulfilling the duty of forbidding evil is stated in the Qur'an:

"And when they forgot that by which they had been reminded, We saved those who had forbidden evil and seized those who wronged, with a wretched punishment, because they were defiantly disobeying."⁷¹

In the Qur'an many prophets are cited for their zeal and determination in guarding the righteous and struggling against evil. Prophet Moses, for instance, strove hard to save the Children of Israel from Pharaoh's tyranny. Pharaoh, introduced in the Qur'an as **"haughty within the land and of the transgressors,"⁷²** enslaved the Egyptian people, slaughtered their sons and humiliated their women. Allah revealed to Prophet Moses:

"So go to him and say, 'Indeed, we are messengers of your Lord, so send with us the Children of Israel and do not torment them. We have come to you with a sign from your Lord. And peace will be upon he who follows the guidance."⁷³

So he went to Pharaoh and demanded that he stop the tyranny imposed on his people and let them leave Egypt with him.

⁷⁰ Surah *an-Nisa'*, 4:75.

⁷¹ Surah *al-A'raf*, 7:165.

⁷² See Surah *Yunus*, 10:83.

⁷³ Surah *Ta Ha*, 20:47.

As this example suggests, Prophet Moses took on responsibility for his people's safety, and for that cause he carried out an unrelenting struggle for many long years until the Pharaoh's tyranny was finally ended. In addition, he strove to strengthen his people morally, and patiently called upon them to pray for Allah's help. Indeed, as a result of the zeal and determination he showed, Allah made him and his followers victorious over Pharaoh.

As such examples reveal, believers always side with the righteous, that is, with the compassionate, tolerant, helpful and self-sacrificing people while standing against evil, resentful, unjust and selfish people. They always strive to stop the tyranny of oppressors and relieve those who are oppressed. While so doing, they enjoy the zeal and excitement of fulfilling Allah's command. And through this good deed they practice the justice preferred by Allah, listen to the voice of their consciences, live by the values of the Qur'an, and ensure the safety of innocent people. So they derive excitement from all these good deeds and the rewards they earn.

The commitment of believers to such matters improves their morality. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi drew attention to the fact that those who take on great responsibility with the intention of earning the good pleasure of Allah attain moral maturity: **"When one commits himself to loftier purposes, his efforts become more sincere. As he puts forth more efforts on behalf of Muslims, he, himself, attains moral maturity."**⁷⁴

Worship

For believers seeking Allah's good pleasure, His approval and love takes priority over everything else. Thus, throughout their lives they continually seek ways to draw nearer to Him. Allah has commanded:

"O you who have believed, fear Allah and seek the means [of nearness] to Him."⁷⁵

Believers regard fulfilling the obligations of worship ordered in the Qur'an as among the means that brings them near to Allah. However, they are aware that performing these alone is not sufficient, and what matters more is the sincerity and enthusiasm one feels while performing worship. As a matter of fact, Allah has stated that it is not the flesh and blood of sacrifices which reach Him but the piety in the hearts of those who offer them:

"Their meat will not reach Allah, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you. Thus have We subjected them to you that you may glorify Allah for that to which He has guided you; and give good tidings to the doers of good."⁷⁶

Awareness of this fact leads believers to engage in all good deeds with the enthusiasm for fulfilling an obligation of worship. They understand that sincerity is the attribute most appreciated by Allah. That sincere acts done for Allah are invaluable in His sight is also related in a narration of

⁷⁴ *The Rules of Struggle*, p. 45.

⁷⁵ *Surah al-Ma'idah*, 5:35.

⁷⁶ *Surah al-Hajj*, 22:37.

Prophet Muhammad (saas), where a believer of good character is defined as a person who finds pleasure in prayer, who performs the worship of his Lord well, and who obeys Him in secret.

In the Qur'an many examples are given regarding the zeal and enthusiasm believers feel for observing worship. Some of them are mentioned in the following pages.

Reciting verses of the Qur'an

In the Qur'an, Allah describes believers:

"Only those believe in Our verses who, when they are reminded by them, fall down in prostration and exalt [Allah] with praise of their Lord, and they are not arrogant."⁷⁷

Prostration when reminded by the verses of Allah is certainly a sign of strong faith and the pleasure they obtain from being servants of Allah.

They feel excitement about possessing the Qur'an, the Book revealed by Allah that includes all knowledge, realizing that every single verse of the Qur'an is a manifestation of Allah's love, mercy and justice toward them. Furthermore, they have great happiness in their souls for having been given a clear consciousness enabling them to comprehend all that. Therefore, they feel close to Allah and feel a deep attachment to Him, which gives them tranquillity. In the Qur'an it is stated that believers fall to the ground in prostration, weeping due to the emotion they experience upon hearing verses of Allah:

"Say, 'Believe in it or do not believe.' Indeed, those who were given knowledge before it – when it is recited to them, they fall upon their faces in prostration, and they say, 'Exalted is our Lord! Indeed, the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled.' And they fall upon their faces weeping, and it [i.e., the Qur'an] increases them in humble submission."⁷⁸

In the verses above Allah draws attention to the fact that the Qur'an, when recited to believers, increases their humility, that is, their fear and reverence for Him. And Allah informs us that the prophets also fell on their faces in prostration, weeping due to the emotion they felt from the verses of Allah:

"Those were the ones upon whom Allah bestowed favor from among the prophets of the descendants of Adam and of those We carried [in the ship] with Noah, and of the descendants of Abraham and Israel [i.e., Jacob], and of those whom We guided and chose. When the verses of the Most Merciful were recited to them, they fell down prostrating and weeping."⁷⁹

In another verse it is stated that the skins of the believers who fear Allah tremble when they hear verses of the Qur'an:

"Allah has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the

⁷⁷ *Surah as-Sajdah*, 32:15.

⁷⁸ *Surah al-Isra'*, 17:107-109.

⁷⁹ *Surah Maryam*, 19:58.

remembrance of Allah. That is the guidance of Allah by which He guides whom He wills. And one whom Allah leaves astray – for him there is no guide."⁸⁰

As stated in a Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (saas), believers know that the reward of those who read the Qur'an and remember Allah is great, and this increases their zeal even more: **"Fear Allah, for He is the one who sets right all that concerns you. Recite the Qur'an and keep remembering Allah, for you will be remembered in the heavens, and it will be light for you on the earth."**⁸¹

Supplication

"And when My servants ask you concerning Me – indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me so that they may be [rightly] guided."⁸²

Allah has summoned all people to supplication. He has informed them that He is nearer to them than their jugular vein. He hears them when they pray to Him, and He will answer their prayers. Allah's granting such an opportunity to people and His being a witness to everything they say or think is a cause of excitement for believers, the excitement of knowing Allah's friendship, His constant protection of them, and His blessings upon them. For this reason believers take refuge in their Lord with great emotion, profoundly feel the need for His guidance, and ask His help for anything at any time. Another cause of enthusiasm for them is that there is no limit to what they may ask of Allah. Everyone has the opportunity to ask for anything he might need, whether important or insignificant, spiritual or material. Allah answers the supplications of His servants according to what is best for them.

Repentance to draw closer to Allah

Man is prone to make mistakes. It would be unreasonable to expect anyone to have knowledge of everything or to be perfect in conduct because the world is a place where Allah tests man. He will remain in this world for a short while, where he will acquire better qualities through the guidance of his Lord, and then pass on to the Hereafter, which is his permanent abode. That is why mistakes, imperfections and faults are particular to this world, which is a place of trial. The important thing is not to persist in mistakes, to follow the right as soon as one recognizes it, and to quit one's old, bad habits. This process continues toward perfection, although believers are people who are aware that they are imperfect and weak servants of Allah. Hence, they seek Allah's forgiveness and repent. Repentance, an important form of worship ordered in the Qur'an, grants them spiritual bliss.

When believers err, they do not show pessimism; rather, they experience hope and the expectation that Allah will forgive them. As soon as they realize that they have committed a wrong, they

⁸⁰ *Surah az-Zumar*, 39:23.

⁸¹ Narrated by Ahmad bin hanbal.

⁸² *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2:186.

immediately seek refuge in Allah and ask His forgiveness. Allah describes this characteristic of His sincere servants in the Qur'an:

"And [the righteous are] those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins – and who can forgive sins except Allah? – and who do not persist in what they have done while they know."⁸³

Allah's good tidings that He accepts sincere repentance from His servants inspires hope and excitement. That is because until death comes upon them, even the most evil people of this world have the opportunity to be purified of sin and to acquire attributes making them worthy of Paradise. Allah describes His mercy and love for all people as follows:

"Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful."⁸⁴

Perceiving Allah's kindness and mercy to them and expecting His forgiveness every time they turn to Him inspires deep feelings of love and excitement in the hearts of believers.

Communicating the good values of the Qur'an

Allah ordered the development of a community among people which summons others to good conduct, kindness and righteousness:

"And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful."⁸⁵

In compliance with this verse sincere Muslims endeavor to convey the beauty of Qur'anic morality, point out the moral corruption inherent in ignorant societies and, by the will of Allah, guide people to the right path. Since they have personally attained peace and comfort through the Islamic way of living, they also wish others to experience the same. Furthermore, knowing that Hell is a definite truth, they want to protect all people from eternal torment by encouraging them to lead the kind of life that will please Allah because one's deeds in this world determine an eternal life in either Paradise or Hell. Even a single person's eternal salvation means a lot to believers. For this reason they commit themselves to any sacrifice to save someone from Hell and guide him toward attaining Allah's mercy. They might even spend months or years, day and night, to help a person adopt the good values of Islam. Similarly, they eagerly spend their wealth for this cause. The zeal they feel grants them great power both

⁸³ *Surah ali-Imran*, 3:135.

⁸⁴ *Surah az-Zumar*, 39:53.

⁸⁵ *Surah ali-Imran*, 3:104.

in the physical and spiritual sense. To the end of their lives they never stop communicating the message of Allah in the best and wisest way.

However, it should be made clear that even if all their efforts do not result in a single person's guidance, they will never feel frustrated because the duty of a believer is only to communicate the message, while it is Allah who actually guides an individual. From the Qur'an it is known that many of the idolaters in Makkah did not embrace Islam in spite of all the sincere and great efforts of Prophet Muhammad (saas). But his effort was rewarded, and Allah revealed to him:

"Indeed, [O Muhammad], you do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. And He is most knowing of the [rightly] guided."⁸⁶

It is stated in the Qur'an that all prophets showed the same commitment in communicating the message. The difficulties they encountered along the way never discouraged them. On the contrary, they continually resorted to every method to show their peoples the right path. The zealous efforts of Prophet Noah have been described as follows:

"He said, 'My Lord, indeed I invited my people [to truth] night and day. But my invitation increased them not except in flight [i.e., aversion]. And indeed, every time I invited them that You may forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, covered themselves with their garments, persisted, and were arrogant with [great] arrogance. Then I invited them publicly. Then I announced to them and [also] confided to them secretly and said, "Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver."⁸⁷

As the verses reveal, Prophet Noah conveyed the message with great zeal to reconcile the hearts of his people. In spite of their evasion, he never faltered in conveying the attributes of Allah. His people, however, stubbornly turned away each time they heard the truth. Owing to the zeal and excitement Prophet Noah felt about fulfilling Allah's command and conveying His message, he did not denounce their behavior but continued his duty with an unyielding determination. Despite the arrogance they showed, he sought other viable methods to reconcile their hearts. His intent was to relieve them of the corruption of their ignorant society by reminding them about Allah, both openly and through less obvious methods.

It must be kept in mind that the efforts of Prophet Noah and others who convey the message with great zeal and sincerity will not remain unrewarded. By Allah's will each word uttered and every second spent for His cause will be generously compensated.

"[Such believers are] the repentant, the worshippers, the praisers [of Allah], the travelers [for His cause], those who bow and prostrate [in prayer], those who enjoin what is right and

⁸⁶ *Surah al-Qasas*, 28:56.

⁸⁷ *Surah Nuh*, 71:5-10.

forbid what is wrong, and those who observe the limits [set by] Allah. And give good tidings to the believers."⁸⁸

The thought of Paradise

One of the subjects about which believers feel excitement most is that of Paradise and the blessings they will attain there. Paradise presents to man an existence unprecedented in the life of this world; none of the defects or flaws present in this life exist there. Paradise is created not for test, as is life on this earth, but as a place of compensation. Furthermore, Allah purposely created this world as an imperfect place so that people can long for Paradise and strive hard to attain it. One who strives to attain perfection throughout his life desires Paradise with an even greater enthusiasm.

In the Hereafter believers will rejoice at being saved from the torment of Hell, which is what they strove to avoid during their lives. On the other hand, those who fought against Allah's religion, against people's adherence to Qur'anic morality, and those who opposed believers and attempted to suppress them will fully receive whatever they deserve as a manifestation of Allah's absolute justice. How those people will be repaid and the joy believers feel upon witnessing it is stated in the Qur'an:

"Indeed, those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed. And when they passed by them, they would exchange derisive glances. And when they returned to their people, they would return jesting. And when they saw them, they would say, 'Indeed, those are truly lost.' But they had not been sent as guardians over them. So today⁸⁹ those who believed are laughing at the disbelievers, on adorned couches, observing. Have the disbelievers [not] been rewarded for what they used to do?"⁹⁰

The fact that unbeliever's will be repaid with Allah's justice heals the hearts of believers. Indeed, the mere thought of Allah's promise stirs a deep excitement in the hearts of believers.

In addition, remembering the angels' greetings and salutations in Paradise and the way believers will be hosted therein is a major source of pleasure. They will meet the angels of Allah who will lead them to Paradise, their eternal abode. While those who avoided serving Allah in the life of this world will be in pain and fear at being seized by angels of punishment, believers will be accompanied by angels of mercy in peace and security. This expectation enables believers to feel great joy. How they will be met in Paradise is described in the Qur'an as follows:

"Gardens of perpetual residence; they will enter them with whoever were righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their descendants. And the angels will enter upon them from every

⁸⁸ *Surah at-Tawbah*, 9:112.

⁸⁹ On the Day of Judgement.

⁹⁰ *Surah al-Mutaffifeen*, 83:29-36.

gate, [saying], 'Peace be upon you for what you patiently endured. And excellent is the final home.'"⁹¹

"The ones whom the angels take in death, [being] good and pure – [the angels] will say, 'Peace be upon you. Enter Paradise for what you used to do.'"⁹²

Another reason why the thought of Paradise excites believers is undoubtedly the unprecedented nature of the blessings promised to them. But what is more exciting than that is their attainment of Allah's approval, the result they had desired and worked for all through their lives:

"And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhajireen⁹³ and the Ansar⁹⁴ and those who followed them with good conduct – Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment."⁹⁵

In the above verse Allah gives glad tidings that He will be pleased with the people He accepts into Paradise. Likewise, it is stressed in the Qur'an that the greatest among blessings in Paradise is Allah's approval:

"Allah has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from Allah is greater. It is that which is the great attainment."⁹⁶

In addition, Allah gives more good news to believers regarding the favors of Paradise:

"Peace,' a word from a Merciful Lord."⁹⁷

And this is the best compensation for the sincere struggle believers put forth in the course of their lives.

Believers also feel the excitement of contemplating the beauty of Paradise, which is beyond present human comprehension despite many detailed descriptions in the Qur'an. Allah has revealed that there are as many beauties and blessings there as man's soul could ever desire or his mind could ever imagine. Man's horizons in this world are too limited to give a full grasp of the variety of those eternal

⁹¹ *Surah ar-Ra'd*, 13:23-24.

⁹² *Surah an-Nahl*, 16:32.

⁹³ Those who emigrated from Makkah and settled in Madinah for the cause of Islam.

⁹⁴ The inhabitants of Madinah who had accepted Islam and assisted the Prophet (SAAS) and other emigrants upon their arrival there.

⁹⁵ *Surah at-Tawbah*, 9:100.

⁹⁶ *Surah at-Tawbah*, 9:72.

⁹⁷ *Surah Ya Seen*, 36:58.

blessings. Indeed, Paradise is replete with endless surprises for believers. Thinking about these surprises and knowing that they shall continue by the will of Allah for all eternity brings great pleasure.

Believers have some knowledge even now about certain of the blessings in Paradise, thanks to Qur'anic descriptions. For instance, believers know that they will be together with their loved ones and friends. They will be companions of all the prophets, martyrs, truthful, devoted and sincere believers of the past and will have the honor of being in the company of these noble souls with whom Allah is pleased. They will experience true love and friendship there and will never get bored.

Satan will never be able to approach the people of Paradise; he will be subjected to eternal torment in the Hellfire, so in Paradise everyone will be trustworthy, good tempered and faithful to their Lord. No unfavorable morals peculiar to ignorant societies (such as hatred, rage or jealousy) will exist there; they will perish once and for all.

In Paradise no difficulties particular to the life of this world will persist. There will be no need to thwart the plans of those who devise plots or to be alert against the strategies of hypocrites. Believers will be hosted there for all eternity, residing in peace and joy among whatever favors their soul desire. All people will be created in the best form and will be purified of human imperfections. They will be good-natured, beautiful, loving and equal in age. The natural laws of the life of this world will no longer apply; a new life with new kinds of blessings has been prepared for those whose faith was assured. Paradise is additionally a place of physical magnificence with splendid mansions, perpetual fruit trees within easy reach, rivers of honey, and many other appealing aesthetic aspects.

Above and beyond all that, "eternity," a concept the human mind finds difficult to grasp, permeates Paradise. Life in Paradise is not limited to hundreds, thousands, billions or trillions of years... it is an endless and eternal life. Man will not feel boredom or weariness therein, and he will forever derive great pleasure from every moment he spends in it.

Thinking about these blessings while still in the world and the hope of attaining Paradise becomes a major source of zeal and desire for believers. With the incentive of obtaining such blessings, they become more zealous and put forth more effort to be servants of Allah who are worthy of Paradise. As the Qur'an describes, they compete with each other in good works and strive to be foremost in winning **"a garden as wide as the heavens and earth."**⁹⁸

⁹⁸ *Surah ali'Imran*, 3:133.

THE BENEFITS OF ZEAL AND EXCITEMENT FOR BELIEVERS

Obtaining power and strength

Throughout their lives people seek ways to attain mental and physical strength. Toward this end they turn to medicine and science expecting results from various drugs or mental exercises. Yet, they fail to find a formula which will keep them vivid, lively and energetic until the end of their lives.

The only thing that can keep a person mentally and physically strong and alert is faith. The fear of Allah in man's heart makes him alert, aware and strong every moment. Allah grants believers this power because of their faith in Him and devotion to the Qur'an, and believers' zeal and desire to earn Allah's approval gives them this infinite power. Their constant remembrance of the fact that the life of this world is short and death and judgement are imminent is a constant source of motivation and activity for them. Their faith-related zeal disallows any frustration or disheartenment and inspires in them fresh energy to engage in good deeds one after another day and night.

Apart from physical strength believers gain awareness and clear consciousness. They can readily perceive the intricate aspects of events, devise ingenious solutions not visualized by others, identify occurrences in the most comprehensive way, and draw the most accurate conclusions. Even at times of exhaustion, they have a sharp consciousness due to their zeal. They carry out their tasks in the most precise and perfect way possible and, by the will of Allah, obtain successful results. In brief, they display boundless resolution and strength in everything they do and never become weak-hearted. In case they fail to attain immediate success, they never despair or lose their commitment, aware that the outcome of every effort is always favorable for believers.

Obtaining the aid and support of Allah

"And Allah will surely support those who support Him [i.e., His cause]. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might."⁹⁹

In this verse Allah promises His aid to those who hold fast to the religion zealously. In the Qur'an, Allah gives the example of Tālūt and his army. Some of the men in Tālūt's army who were about to fight against the army of Goliath (Jālūt) displayed weak-heartedness and feigned that they had no strength to fight. However, those who had true faith in Allah and served Him zealously showed courage and said:

"How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah. And Allah is with the patient."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ *Surah al-hajj*, 22:40.

¹⁰⁰ *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2:249.

They sought refuge in Allah, so Allah supported the pious servants with His help and made them victorious over the army of Goliath in spite of their small number. The event is described in the Qur'an as follows:

"And when Talut went forth with the soldiers, he said, 'Indeed, Allah will be testing you with a river. So whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste it is indeed of me, excepting one who takes [from it] in the hollow of his hand.' But they drank from it, except a very few of them. Then when he had crossed it along with those who believed with him, they said, 'There is no power for us today against Jalut and his soldiers.' But those who were certain that they would meet Allah said, 'How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah. And Allah is with the patient.' And when they went forth to face Jalut and his soldiers, they said, 'Our Lord, pour upon us patience and plant firmly our feet and give us victory over the disbelieving people.' So they defeated them by permission of Allah, and Dawud killed Jalut, and Allah gave him the kingship and wisdom [i.e., prophethood] and taught him from that which He willed. And if it were not for Allah checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted, but Allah is full of favor to the worlds."¹⁰¹

In addition, Allah adds more faith to His devout servants' faith and strengthens them by sending down tranquillity into their hearts when they hold fast to the religion. This feeling of tranquillity and calm enables them not to worry no matter what befalls them. The support Allah provided to believers for their zeal is shown in the Qur'an:

"It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise."¹⁰²

"Certainly was Allah pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you, [O Muhammad], under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquillity upon them and rewarded them with an imminent conquest."¹⁰³

"Then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Messenger and upon the believers and sent down soldiers [i.e., angels] you did not see and punished those who disbelieved. And that is the recompense of the disbelievers."¹⁰⁴

The Qur'an also provides us with the knowledge that while disbelievers were devising a plan to assassinate Prophet Muhammad (saas), Allah supported him by sending down tranquillity:

¹⁰¹ *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2:249-251.

¹⁰² *Surah al-Fath*, 48:4.

¹⁰³ *Surah al-Fath*, 48:18.

¹⁰⁴ *Surah at-Tawbah*, 9:26.

"If you do not aid him [i.e., the Prophet] – Allah has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Makkah] as one of two¹⁰⁵, when they were in the cave and he [i.e., Muhammad] said to his companion, 'Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us.' And Allah sent down His tranquillity upon him and supported him with soldiers [i.e., angels] you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allah – that is the highest. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise."¹⁰⁶

Allah's help, as the Qur'an relates, is one of the rewards believers will obtain in this world because of their zeal. The recompense they will receive in the Hereafter, on the other hand, is certainly much greater.

Obtaining Paradise

Allah has given glad tidings of Paradise to those who have faith and engage in good deeds:

"And give good tidings to those who believe and do righteous deeds that they will have gardens [in Paradise] beneath which rivers flow. Whenever they are provided with a provision of fruit therefrom, they will say, 'This is what we were provided with before.' And it is given to them in likeness. And they will have therein purified spouses, and they will abide therein eternally."¹⁰⁷

Allah will bestow these blessings on them in return for the zeal and effort they displayed in the life of this world. Believers practice the verse:

"Hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden [i.e., Paradise] as wide as the heavens and earth."¹⁰⁸

They devote all their efforts to attain Paradise, for Allah says:

"And whoever volunteers good – then indeed, Allah is Appreciative and Knowing."¹⁰⁹

Allah rewards good deeds that are done sincerely and wholeheartedly, so believers will be rewarded for whatever they did sincerely even as much as an atom's weight of good. Hence, they will be pleased with their Lord and their Lord will be pleased with them:

"Allah will say, 'This is the Day when the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness.' For them are gardens [in Paradise] beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever, Allah being pleased with them, and they with Him. That is the great attainment."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ The second was his companion, Abu Bakr.

¹⁰⁶ *Surah at-Tawbah*, 9:40.

¹⁰⁷ *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2:25.

¹⁰⁸ *Surah ali 'Imran*, 3: 133.

¹⁰⁹ *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2:158.

To the righteous it will be said:

"O reassured soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him], and enter among My [righteous] servants and enter My Paradise."¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ *Surah al-Ma'idah*, 5:119.

¹¹¹ *Surah al-Fajr*, 89:27-30.

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THOSE WHOSE FAITH IS NOT ASSURED

It was stated earlier that the faith of everyone who says, "I believe" is not the same. In this section the indifferent state of mind of people who do not have faith in the real sense is examined. A lack of true commitment is something consequential to weakness of faith. Before proceeding with this topic, the reasons for these differences can be clarified by looking at how the Qur'an identifies such people, their viewpoints on religion, and their purposes in life.

Those whose faith is not assured

In the Qur'an such people are also called **"those in whose hearts is a disease,"** "hypocrites," "those who hold back" or "those who stay behind." It may be observed that they belong neither completely to the society of ignorance nor to the Islamic society, as stated in the following verses:

"They are neither of you nor of them."¹¹²

"...Wavering between them, belonging neither to these [i.e., the believers] nor to those [i.e., the disbelievers]."¹¹³

However, it is noteworthy that such people generally live among Muslims. Their appearance, lifestyle and some of their attitudes resemble those of believers. The truth is, however, that they are not really like them because the most distinct characteristic of believers is their sincere devotion to Allah, while these people lack strong faith in their hearts. Although they express belief, they are not believers in the true sense. Of this Allah says the following:

"And of the people are some who say, 'We believe in Allah and the Last Day,' but they are not believers. They [think to] deceive Allah and those who believe, but they deceive not except themselves and perceive it not."¹¹⁴

What they state is vastly different from what they conceal within themselves, mainly due to "sickness" in their hearts. This fact is also stated in the Qur'an:

"In their hearts is disease, so Allah has increased their disease; and for them is a painful punishment because they [habitually] used to lie."¹¹⁵

It is not a disease in the physical sense but is of a spiritual nature. One in whose heart is such an illness fails to comprehend faith properly or live by it. Although he sees obvious signs of Allah's

¹¹² *Surah al-Mujadilah*, 58:14.

¹¹³ *Surah an-Nisa'*, 4:143.

¹¹⁴ *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2:8-9.

¹¹⁵ *Surah al-Baqarah*, 2:10.

existence, he cannot submit his heart to Him and fails to meticulously observe His limits. He is unable to live by Allah's religion completely because although his conscience guides him to the right, he is too weak to practice what his tongue confirms. Compared to the blessings of Paradise, he considers worldly benefits much more easily attainable. Hence, he becomes deeply attached to this world and does not adequately value the Hereafter.

Their presence among believers

It is surely interesting to note that those in whose hearts is disease prefer to live with believers although they do not share the same ideals. One reason for this preference is that such people desire to benefit from the advantages of religion and the peaceful and secure environment believers provide. They find it more comfortable among believers who display virtuous conduct and would rather live in a society of this kind of people not encountered in an ignorant society. While lacking certainty in their hearts, they do not entirely disbelieve, although they cannot integrate completely into the society of ignorance nor into the society of believers. The doubt in their hearts accounts for this dilemma. They find the life of this world more alluring but they also would like to have the blessings Allah promises to believers in this world and the Hereafter. Although they have no certainty of faith, thoughts such as, "What if it is correct?" and "What if those promises are really true?" cause them to hope that in addition to worldly pleasures they can also take advantage of the blessings and bounties that believers attain.

They expect that believers with sincere faith will do the duties that are required in the name of religion while they can take advantage of any worldly benefits resulting from them. However, in case of some hardship or problem they avoid joining them. In the Qur'an the attitude of such people at the time of Prophet Muhammad (saas) illustrates this kind of rationale:

"And indeed, there is among you he who lingers behind; and if disaster strikes you, he says, 'Allah has favored me in that I was not present with them.' But if bounty comes to you from Allah, he will surely say, although there had never been between you and him any affection, 'Oh, I wish I had been with them so I could have attained a great attainment.'"¹¹⁶

"[There are] those who wait [and watch] you. Then if you gain a victory from Allah, they say, 'Were we not with you?' But if the disbelievers have a success, they say [to them], 'Did we not gain the advantage over you, but we protected you from the believers?' Allah will judge between [all of] you on the Day of Resurrection, and never will Allah give the disbelievers over the believers a way [to overcome them]."¹¹⁷

These people want to take advantage of the benefits believers enjoy, so at times they try to attract their attention and convince believers of their commitment to the religion. However, since the believers have witnessed their indifference and slackness openly displayed up to that point, they cannot succeed in persuading them.

¹¹⁶ Surah *an-Nisa*, 4:72-73.

¹¹⁷ Surah *an-Nisa*, 4:141.

Hypocritical people have such a distorted rationale that they manage to deceive even themselves and think that they can share in the rewards believers will obtain in the next life. In the Qur'an their true position in the Hereafter is described:

"...On the Day the hypocrite men and hypocrite women will say to those who believed, 'Wait for us that we may acquire some of your light.' It will be said, 'Go back behind you and seek light.'¹¹⁸ And a wall will be placed between them with a door, its interior containing mercy, but on the outside of it is torment. They [i.e., the hypocrites] will call to them [i.e., the believers], 'Were we not with you?' They will say, 'Yes, but you afflicted yourselves and waited and doubted, and wishful thinking deluded you until there came the command of Allah. And the Deceiver [i.e., Satan] deceived you concerning Allah. So today no ransom will be taken from you or from those who disbelieved. Your refuge is the Fire. It is most worthy of you, and wretched is the destination.'¹¹⁹

Such people must realize that unless they have sincere faith in their hearts, their living among believers will be of no use to them before Allah. Because Allah has granted people consciences, wisdom and faculties of judgement, He will question everyone individually and reward or punish him accordingly. One's sincere efforts to earn His good pleasure will earn His rewards. Expressing one's devotion will not suffice because the way one conducts himself must conform to his words. Therefore, those who are negligent deceive themselves by thinking that merely being among believers will help them on the Day of Judgement. The consequence in the Hereafter for those who work only for self-interest rather than for Allah is revealed in a Hadith of His Messenger (saas): **"Whoever makes others hear [of his good deeds] – Allah will make his [true intention] heard; and whoever makes a show [of his deeds] – Allah will expose him."¹²⁰**

The indifference of those in whose hearts is disease

"And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to the other direction]. He has lost the world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss."¹²¹

This verse reveals the kind of "enthusiasm" shown by people who do not hold fast to religion. They seem very zealous as long as personal interests are not affected. However, when there is a conflict of interest, they lose their enthusiasm and excitement. Since they do not believe with certainty, such a situation will allow them to overlook many Islamic obligations. They forget that Allah created this world as a place of trial, that Allah will test man through many occurrences, which seem either good or bad, and that only those who are steadfast will be rewarded. The disease in their hearts causes them to

¹¹⁸ To where light was acquired, i.e., in the worldly life.

¹¹⁹ *Surah al-hadeed*, 57:13-15.

¹²⁰ Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

¹²¹ *Surah al-hajj*, 22:11.

harbor doubts about Allah's support. Instead of putting their trust in Allah, they fall into despair and begin to entertain unjust thoughts about Him. Thus, the disease concealed in their hearts surfaces. In the Qur'an, Allah describes the way they lose their zeal abruptly in the face of trials and begin to doubt Allah's promise:

"And [remember] when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is disease said, 'Allah and His Messenger did not promise us except delusion.'"¹²²

This attitude is surely a result of deficiency in their faith. Such people fail to understand that everything they encounter was created purposely to test them. Those in whose hearts is disease differ from sincere believers by the attitude they assume toward such trials. Believers become more zealous and peaceful by putting their trust in Allah no matter what befalls them and knowing that Allah's help is always near.

Their lingering behind

People displaying hypocritical tendencies adopt a rationale that is completely different from that of believers and very distant from that of the Qur'an. Due to the defect in their belief, their rationale is based not on gaining the acceptance of Allah but merely on pleasing themselves and deriving personal benefit. For this reason they consider engaging in Islamic work as a futile effort. Since their faith in the Hereafter is rather cloudy, they assume that efforts made for the Hereafter may not bring adequate benefit in return for all their work and exhaustion. Hence, they find it more profitable to spend their time in attaining immediate worldly gains instead of benefits for Islam. Fearing gullibility, they hang back preferring "moderation," as stated in the Qur'an:

"And indeed, there is among you he who lingers behind."¹²³

In short, they are unenthusiastic about any matters, which will not provide them with obvious worldly benefits.

When they meet a situation that demands effort for the sake of the needy, the oppressed or the believers, they hold back. Constantly offering excuses, they try to make it seem insurpassably difficult. Since they do not live by religion, they lack the motivation and energy to solve a problem or to complete a good work. They display reluctance either by suddenly withdrawing and leaving believers in the lurch or by working apathetically.

However, if the same indifferent person is offered a proposal for a prestigious position in a company with a high salary and if he is further promised that he will become a shareholder provided he displays excellent performance, his attitude will be quite different. No doubt, considering the advantages of such a position, he will display remarkable enthusiasm and excellence in his work and rapidly develop satisfactory solutions to trying problems. There is a great contrast between the reluctance of these people when expected to work for the sake of Islam and the enthusiasm they display when their

¹²² *Surah al-Ahzab*, 33:12.

¹²³ *Surah an-Nisa'*, 4:72.

own interests are at stake. Their preference of worldly benefits over Allah's pleasure accounts for the fluctuating attitude.

Lingering behind is not advantageous but foolishness

Certainly, the reluctance of those with diseased hearts exposes how great a deception they are living. Failure to strive for Allah's good pleasure is a loss because any effort put forth for the cause of Allah brings the greatest benefit possible. Each effort one puts forth with sincerity will grant him the approval of Allah. Allah promises the best to His servants with whom He is pleased, both in this world and in the Hereafter. A pious believer is not eager because he expects an immediate recompense in this world. Knowing that Allah is well pleased with his efforts is enough for him. Allah, the owner of eternal justice, love, mercy and grace, is most ready to appreciate services rendered for His cause, and states that any effort, even as little as a mustard-seed or an atom, is not wasted:

"Indeed, Allah does not do injustice, [even] as much as an atom's weight; while if there is a good deed, He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward."¹²⁴

"For those who do good in this world is good; and the home of the Hereafter is better. And how excellent is the home of the righteous."¹²⁵

"[And Luqman said], 'O my son, indeed if a deed should be the weight of a mustard seed and should be within a rock or anywhere in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Indeed, Allah is Subtle and Acquainted.'"¹²⁶

It is most unwise to be reluctant in undertaking good deeds because the more seriously one exerts effort, the greater reward he receives both in this world and the next. Similarly, the more he avoids, the more he will lose.

¹²⁴ *Surah an-Nisa'*, 4:40.

¹²⁵ *Surah an-Nahl*, 16:30.

¹²⁶ *Surah Luqman*, 31:16.

CONSEQUENCES RESULTING FROM DEEDS DONE UNENTHUSIASTICALLY AND RELUCTANTLY

A majority of people consider the indifference many display towards living by the principles of Islam as an ordinary state of affairs. That is why they do not strive to eliminate this attitude. Indeed, they do not perceive it as a danger, which can drag one to a great loss for all eternity. But in the Qur'an, Allah draws attention to this disease and warns people against its danger. In the Hereafter no one will have the chance to make up for the loss his indifference caused. It will be useful here to outline some of the losses people face due to indifference.

In the Qur'an, Allah says:

"And Allah will surely support those who support Him [i.e., His cause]. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might."¹²⁷

Allah is the protector of those who eagerly hold fast to the religion and put their hearts into obtaining the good pleasure of Allah. Thus, those who think that withholding or lagging behind is more advantageous will be bereft of Allah's support. Such people fail to exercise wisdom or display a clearness of conscience. They cannot sustain the enthusiasm dependent upon sincere faith. Since they observe some Qur'anic ordinances and disregard others, they are not guided to the right path. Their decisions and behaviors are based on ignorant rationales that will never help them to attain true success.

The indifference in their hearts puts them into an idle and negligent state of mind. They become lazy, and since they do not make a serious effort toward the deeds that earn Paradise, they never complete a task in good time. They have no reason to be in a hurry or to expend physical or mental energy. If they face a problem, they fail to confront it with determination although they might have the ability to find many solutions. In brief, the works of unenthusiastic people are generally unproductive and unfruitful. Whatever excuses they make for it, the reality is that they do not feel the zeal and excitement of faith.

Let it be remembered, however, that people with such a disease do the most harm to themselves because apart from what they lose in the life of this world, they will also be disappointed in the Hereafter. Then they will regret that they had not been among the foremost:

"Those will have lost who deny the meeting with Allah, until when the Hour [of resurrection] comes upon them unexpectedly, they will say, 'Oh, [how great is] our regret over what we neglected concerning it,' while they bear their burdens [i.e., sins] on their backs. Unquestionably, evil is that which they bear."¹²⁸

In the Hereafter they will see that what they had undertaken superficially or avoided completely has brought them loss. Similarly, they will witness that whatever they did accomplish was of no avail

¹²⁷ *Surah al-Hajj*, 22:40.

¹²⁸ *Surah al-An'Am*, 6:31.

since they failed to understand the importance of earning Allah's acceptance and did not put forth the required effort for that. In short, all that they have done will be in vain.

"And those who believe will say, 'Are these the ones who swore by Allah their strongest oaths that indeed they were with you?' Their deeds have become worthless, and they have become losers."¹²⁹

"That is because they followed what angered Allah and disliked [what earns] His pleasure, so He rendered worthless their deeds."¹³⁰

"Indeed, those who disbelieved and averted [people] from the path of Allah and opposed the Messenger after guidance had become clear to them – never will they harm Allah at all, and He will render worthless their deeds."¹³¹

"Some faces, that Day, will be humbled. They had been working hard and exhausted."¹³²

Furthermore, at the time of judgement those people might possibly receive their records in their left hand although they had expected it in the right. They supposed that being among believers in the life of this world would bring them salvation in the Hereafter. However, as mentioned earlier, every individual will be given an account of his deeds individually in Allah's presence. The zeal and good works of others will have brought him no good. That day the once indifferent people will call out to believers:

"Were we not with you?"¹³³

But they will be told:

"Read your record. Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as accountant."¹³⁴

Then they will see the truth of what they accomplished and realize all they had neglected. Then they will acknowledge that they truly deserve whatever recompense they will receive.

¹²⁹ Surah *al-Ma'idah*, 5:53.

¹³⁰ Surah *Muhammad*, 47:28.

¹³¹ Surah *Muhammad*, 47:32.

¹³² i.e they were doing deeds during earthly life which did not benefit them since they were not accompanied by true faith or done for the acceptance of Allah. The Qur'anic quotation is Surah *al-Ghashiyah*, 88:2-3.

¹³³ Surah *al-hadeed*, 57:14.

¹³⁴ Surah *al-Isra'*, 17:14.

THE WAY TO OVERCOME LACK OF ENTHUSIASM

The only solution to lack of enthusiasm: fear of Allah

One who comprehends that at the root of indifference (a dangerous behavioral disorder) lies weakness of faith should immediately resort to the methods instructed in the Qur'an to cure himself of this disease. First of all, he must be aware that the main source of energy is consciousness of Allah and put forth efforts to achieve it. Through deep contemplation he must strive to attain a deep faith. He must pray to Allah and ask His help while not hesitating to undertake anything that will improve him.

No doubt, in such a situation one needs to use reason. In the Qur'an, Allah shows that employing one's intellect is the way that guides man to the right path. A person must think about the existence and greatness of Allah, His mercy to mankind, and then comprehend the importance of earning His approval. Similarly, he must think about the purpose of his creation and the way that Allah tests him. He must know that Allah is with him and constantly sees and hears him. He should keep in mind that everything he does, whether important or insignificant, is known by Allah and that he will have to give an account of his deeds on the Day of Judgement.

He must also remember that death is very near and that it may come upon him abruptly. Moreover, he must grasp the fact that the life of this world is brief and that engaging in good deeds to be worthy of Paradise is extremely urgent.

He should reflect on the beauty of Paradise and the great pleasure of its blessings, and try to understand the concept of eternity. He should realize that Hell is a place created only to give anguish to the human body and soul; nothing good, joyful or pleasing exists there, and its inhabitants will remain for all eternity. He must be aware that he will feel overwhelming regret during every moment of his eternal existence unless he now gives serious consideration to the warnings.

If a man ponders sincerely, he will surely arrive at the right conclusion. He will see that rather than meeting such an end, to follow his conscience and hold fast to the religion eagerly is much less difficult. Thus, he will make the right decision and devote the rest of his life – not much more than a couple of decades anyway – to earning the acceptance of Allah, His love and His mercy, and will do his best to win the Paradise Allah promises.

Contemplating the possibility of being in Hell even for a moment causes one to alter his conduct because Hell is such a place that no regret in this world is comparable to the regret felt there. Similarly, no pain in this world can be more intense than the pain in Hell. Reading the verses related to Hell to gain a full understanding of it, as something to be avoided is an effective way of becoming more enthusiastic.

Everyone should think about these facts and realize that lack of enthusiasm is the result of a distorted outlook on the world and the Hereafter and then begin engaging in good deeds as soon as possible. He must remember that the indifference he shows in the face of happenings around him may cause him, in time, to lose his sensitivity of conscience and heart entirely. Therefore, he must hasten to avoid such a condition:

"Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth? And let them not

be like those who were given the Scripture before, and a long period passed over them, so their hearts hardened; and many of them are defiantly disobedient."¹³⁵

In another verse also Allah warns about the hardening of hearts:

"Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do."¹³⁶

In the above verse Allah has given an example of stones from which water emerges and others that crash down from fear of Him. Fear of Allah, as this example reveals, will render unenthusiastic people zealous and lead them to adopt the good values enabling them to compete in righteousness for the sake of Allah.

¹³⁵ *Surah al-hadeed, 57:16.*

¹³⁶ *Surah al-Baqarah, 2:74.*

CONCLUSION

Throughout this book it has been discussed how believers eagerly live by the principles of the religion, how they derive pleasure from their struggle, and how they will be rewarded with great favors and honor in the sight of Allah. Attention was drawn to the intent, determination and courage that zeal grants to believers. Also dealt with is how the verse, **"You will be superior if you are [true] believers"**¹³⁷ manifests itself in those who strive sincerely.

Similarly, the failure of those who do not strive sufficiently and lag behind, although they certainly acknowledge the existence of Allah and the Hereafter, was described. Also explained was the loss they will suffer and the great regret they will feel and their lament, "If only I had been among those who vigorously embraced the religion..." They were reminded that they might well be among those whose lives were in vain and invited to adopt faith wholeheartedly while they still have some time. Those who live among believers and read the Qur'an yet display a different kind of character from that of the believers have been summoned to sincere faith and to be among those who are "foremost" in good deeds.

The good news has been recalled of the mercy Allah grants to those who eagerly embrace Islam, while those who live among believers and observe at close range the perfection of Qur'anic values and of Allah's religion yet do not respond to them as they should were cautioned that they might yet end up in great loss. As Allah advised in the Qur'an:

"Then look how was the end of those who were warned."¹³⁸

Once again, all people of intelligence are reminded to listen to the voice of their consciences and eagerly respond to Allah's invitation. That is because man has the chance to live his life only once. Thus he is tested only once. By the time death comes upon him, there is no second chance.

The life of this world passes "in a blink of an eye." In the present life if one follows his conscience and exerts his willpower for a limited period of time, he will enjoy the bliss Allah grants for all eternity. But should he turn away from the true religion, saying, "I would rather follow my own desires," he will lose eternal bliss as the price for this short and imperfect life, which is both an unprofitable exchange and an unwise choice.

The only wise thing to do is to cease one's obsession for the life of this world and seek the rewards of the Hereafter. For once a person meets the angel of death, he will have no time to think about the pleasures he enjoyed in worldly life or the things he deemed to be so important. Once the soul "reaches the collar bone," he will no longer recall any pleasure he experienced in the life of this world and will only face the terror of the Day of Judgement.

However, if a person devotes his life to Allah and zealously embraces Islam, he will have no reason to fear torment and will attain peace of heart and mind because his record is clean. Having no fear, he will joyfully say on that Day:

¹³⁷ *Surah ali 'Imran*, 3:139.

¹³⁸ *Surah as-Saffat*, 37:73.

"Here, read my record!"¹³⁹

While there is still a chance to earn a blissful end, why would anyone choose instead to fear the exposure of his record and suffer eternal regret and torment? The only thing required for a happy ending is to follow one's conscience and sincerely and enthusiastically live by the values of the Qur'an. The only way to feel peaceful and to derive pleasure from this world in its real sense is this way of life. If one would rather "make the most" of life in the material sense, he will soon realize that he has gained nothing from it.

That is why this book invites all people to make a judgement of conscience. They are encouraged not to consider whatever deeds they have done so far sufficient to procure the best of the Hereafter but rather to continue with the zeal, exuberance and effort of the prophets. They are invited to be of those who compete to become foremost in the race to Allah, to attain Paradise and everlasting mercy. Allah praises those who embrace Islam eagerly and promises them gardens in Paradise abounding with blessings:

"And the forerunners, the forerunners – those are the ones brought near [to Allah] in the Gardens of Pleasure, a [large] company of the former peoples and a few of the later peoples."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ *Surah al-haqqah*, 69:19.

¹⁴⁰ *Surah al-Waqi'ah*, 56:10-14.