

EXCELLENCE OF PATIENCE & GRATEFULNESS

IBN AL-QAYYIM



DARUSSALAM
GLOBAL LEADER IN ISLAMIC BOOKS

Excellence of Patience & Gratefulness

Uddat al-Sabirin wa Dhakhirat al-Shakirin

By: Ibn al-Qayyim

Translated by: Abdul Ali

Published By: Darussalam Publishers

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the written permission of the publisher.



Contents

INTRODUCTION	10
Chapter One: The dictionary meaning of the word Sabr and its derivation and conjugation	14
Chapter Two: The real essence of Sabr and the scholars' views concerning it.....	15
Chapter Three: Names of Sabr, in relation to its object	18
Chapter Four: Difference between Sabr, Tasabbur, Istibar, and Musabarah.....	20
Chapter Five: The categories of patience according to its conditions	22
Chapter Six: The categories of patience according to a person's strength, weakness, ability or inability to combat the forces of desire	24
Chapter Seven: The categories of patience with regard to its object.....	28
Chapter Eight: Patience can be divided into five categories: Obligatory, Desirable, Forbidden, Reprehensible and Permissible.	32
SECTION	32
Chapter Nine: Different levels of patience	34
Chapter Ten: Division of patience into praiseworthy and blameworthy	43
Chapter Eleven: Differences in the patience of the honorable and dishonorable people	50
Chapter Twelve: Techniques that help in exercising patience	51
Chapter Thirteen: Explanation of the fact that human beings can under no circumstance dispense with patience	59
Chapter Fourteen: The most difficult type of patience that people can bear.....	65
Chapter Fifteen: Patience (Sabr) in the verses of the Holy Qur'an	68
Chapter Sixteen: Patience in the narrations of the Sunnah.....	73
Chapter Seventeen: The sayings of the Companions and their followers about patience	93
Chapter Eighteen: Actions connected with affliction like crying, wailing, tearing the clothes, actions of pre-Islamic period and the like.	100
Chapter Nineteen: Patience is half of faith	108
Chapter Twenty: Exposition of the controversy regarding which one is better: patience or thankfulness.....	111
Chapter Twenty-One: Judgment between the two groups and the determination of each case	147

Chapter Twenty-Two: The argument between scholars as to who is better: the grateful rich or the patient poor and the exposition of the correct view in this respect 172

Chapter Twenty-Three: The case for the poor as explained in the Qur’an, the Sunnah, the sayings of the early scholars and by analogical deduction 178

The second illustration is as follows:..... 229

Example 3: 230

Example 4: 230

Example 5: 231

Example 6: 232

Example 7: 232

Example 8: 234

Example 9: 235

Example 10: 235

Example 11: 236

Example 12: 236

Example 13: 236

Example 14: 236

Example 15: 237

Example 16: 238

Example 17: 239

Example 18: 240

Example 19: 240

Example 20: 242

Example 21: 243

Example 22: 243

Chapter Twenty-Four: The argument for the rich in their favor from the Qur’an, Sunnah, the reports of the early scholars and analogy 249

The wealth spoke: 259

They [the rich] argue:	259
Note:	266
Chapter Twenty-Five: Matters which are contradictory to patience and which cause harm and damage it	270
SECTION	271
SECTION	272
Chapter Twenty-Six: Sabr as one of the attributes of the Lord, as He is called al-Sabur and al-Shakur ..	276
SECTION	280
CONCLUSION.....	283

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Beneficent

Praise be to Allah, the Most Patient, the Most Appreciative, the Most High, the Great, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the All-knowing, the Most Powerful. His power is infinite and His Will, regarding His creatures, affects all their affairs. His call for the appointed day reaches the people in their graves. He has decreed the fate of the people and their life span, and He records all their actions and deeds. He apportions their livelihoods and their wealth. He created life and death for all so that He may see which of them is best in conduct. He is the Mighty, the All-Forgiving, the Overpowering, and the Most Powerful. All difficulties are easy for Him. He is the Protector, the Helper, and He is an excellent protector and an excellent helper. Everything, in the heavens and on the earth glorifies Him. To Him belongs all sovereignty and all praise, and He has power over everything.

“It is He who created you, some of you are unbelievers and some of you are believers. Allah sees that which you do. He created the heavens and the earth with truth, and shaped you, and made your shape beautiful. To Him is return.... He knows what you conceal and what you reveal. He is, surely, aware of what is in the hearts. (65/2-5)

I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah. He is the Alone, the only deity, and He is above having anything similar or equal to him, and He is free from having a partner or a helper. He is never inactive, as the heretics claim, and is beyond being similar to the creation; there is nothing like Him. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.

I also bear witness that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger; the best from His creation and the chosen one from among the created beings. He is Allah’s trustee concerning the revelation and His envoy to His slaves. He is the most knowledgeable of all the people concerning Allah; he is the most fearful of Allah, the most sincere to his community, the most steadfast concerning Allah’s commands, and the most grateful for Allah’s bounties. He has the closest access to Him, is the highest in rank with Him, the greatest in honor and having the greatest means of intercession with Him.

Allah, the Almighty sent him as a caller to Paradise, an inviter to faith, working earnestly to achieve His pleasure, commanding what is good and prohibiting what is evil. He conveyed the message of His Lord, proclaimed what he was commanded, and suffered for the sake of Allah such hardships that no other human being ever will. He remained steadfast and grateful to Allah until he attained His appreciation. He remained firm in his endurance in such a lofty manner that no other can ever attain; he advanced in the rank of gratefulness, reaching a position higher than all other grateful people do. The result of this is that Allah, His angels, His Messengers and all believers offer their praises of him, so that he alone has been singled out to be granted the banner of praise. Adam and all other Messengers and Prophets will be under this banner. Allah shows His praise in the opening of His Book which He revealed to him, and He made it the beginning of the Torah and the Gospel, as reported in the Hadeeth. He made His praise the last words to be spoken by the people who were guided by Him to deserve His reward. The Almighty called his community ‘the ones who praise the most’ (al-hammadun) even before they came into existence because they engaged in His praise in prosperity and adversity, and in ease and hardship. He enabled his followers to enter the abode of reward, to enjoy recompense ahead of all other people. The closest person to his banner is the one who praises Allah and remembers Him much. The highest in rank is the one who exercises patience and often expresses thanks. May Allah, His angels, His Prophets and Messengers and all believers send their blessings and salutations upon him as he declared the oneness of Allah, taught it and called the people to it.

Allah, the Exalted made the quality of endurance similar to a horse that does not stumble, like a sword that does not fail, like a victorious fighter who is never defeated and like a fortified castle that defies

destruction and damage. Endurance and triumph are, therefore, like brothers that do not part from one another.

“We are suckled by the breast of the same mother sharing among us on a dark night.

We will never be separated.”

Triumph is joined with endurance, relief with distress and ease with hardship. Endurance, unaided by equipment and an army of soldiers, is more helpful to the one who exercises it. It is as close to triumph as the head is to the body. Allah the Trustworthy and the Truthful, promises in His clear statement, which is found in the Book, that He will reward those who persevere patiently without measure. He has declared that He is with them with His guidance, dominant help, and a clear victory. He says (what means):

“Be patient and persevere, for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.” (8/46)

Those who persevere with His divine company achieve the best in this world and in the Hereafter, and they gain the seen and unseen bounties of the Almighty.

The Almighty imbues leadership of the religion with endurance and firm belief. He says (what means):

“When they became steadfast and believed firmly in our message, We raised leaders among them guiding them according to Our command.” (32/24)

He declares in an emphatic way that endurance is best for those who exercise it. He says (what means):

“If you persevere in endurance, this is surely best for those who persevere in endurance.” (16/126)

Allah also announces that perseverance in endurance, together with consciousness of Allah, foils the stratagem of an enemy even if he has greater power. He says (what means):

“If you remain steadfast and are conscious of Allah their schemes will not harm you in the least. Allah is encompassing what they do.” (3/120)

He relates to us about His truthful Prophet Yoosuf (peace be upon him), whose endurance and consciousness of Allah led him to the position of honor and power. He says (what means):

“Whosoever is conscious of Allah and perseveres in endurance, Allah does not suffer the reward of those who do right to be lost.” (12/90)

He attributes success to endurance and consciousness of Allah. The believers understood this from Him, as He taught them (what means):

“O believers! Be steadfast, vie in steadfastness, strengthen each other and be conscious of Allah that you may succeed.” (3/200)

He told us that He loves the people who persevere with patience, and this is the greatest encouragement for those who aspire for it. He says (what means):

“Allah loves those who endure in patience” (3/146)

He gave to those who remain steadfast the glad tidings of three things, when He said (what means):

“Give good tidings to those who are steadfast, those who say, when afflicted with calamity, ‘We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return. These will be given blessings and mercy from their Lord and it is they who are rightly guided.’” (2/155-157)

He commanded His servants to seek help through endurance and prayer against the vicissitudes of the world and the religion. He, the Most High, says (what means):

“Seek help through endurance and prayer. It is indeed hard except on those who are humble.” (2/45)

He decreed that those who endure with patience will be the ones to succeed in gaining access to Paradise and protection from Hell. He declared (what means):

*“I rewarded them this day because they persevered in patience. They are indeed the triumphant.”
(23/111)*

Allah also related that the desire for His rewards and turning away from the world and its finery can only be achieved by those who believe and persevere in patience.

“The people who were given knowledge said, ‘Alas for you! Allah’s reward is better for those who believe and do good deeds: only those who are steadfast will attain it.’” (28/80)

The Almighty also indicated that repelling evil with good makes the evildoer a close and intimate friend. He said (what means):

“Good and evil cannot be equal. Repel evil with what is better. Then he between whom and you there is enmity will become as a close and intimate friend.” (41/34)

Only those who endure patiently and those who are fortunate will attain this quality.

Allah also affirmed (what means):

“Surely man is in loss except those who believe and do good deeds, and urge one another to truth and urge one another to steadfastness.” (103/2-3)

He divided His creation into two groups: the people of the right and the people of the left. He favored the people of right by making them urge one another to steadfastness and compassion, and He favored the steadfast and grateful people with the benefits of His signs in order to differentiate them. He said, in four verses of His Book (what means):

“Surely there are signs in this for every steadfast thankful person.” (14/5, 31/31, 34/5, 42/33)

Allah, the Exalted attached forgiveness and reward with good deeds and patience. Any task is easy for those whom He makes it easy. He stated (what means):

“Except those who are steadfast and do good deeds, they are the ones who will attain forgiveness and big reward.” (11/11)

He also indicated that steadfastness and forgiveness are virtues that never fail. He affirmed this by saying (what means):

“The one who is steadfast and forgives that is one of the greatest things.” (42/43)

He commanded His Messenger to endure with patience in carrying out His orders and told him that his patience was from Him, and that all problems would be made easy. He said (what means):

“Endure patiently in your Lord’s command; you are under Our watchful eyes.” (52/48)

“Be steadfast, your steadfastness is only from Allah. Do not grieve over them; do not be distressed by their scheming. Surely Allah is with those who are mindful and do good.” (16/127,128)

Patience is the foundation to which the believer always returns. It is the cushion of his faith on which he rests. The one who lacks patience has little or no faith; if he was to have any faith, then it will be weak and negligible. Such a person is from among those who worship Allah as if they are upon the edge of a blade. If good comes to him, he is content, but if he is tested, then he reverts to his old ways. He has lost both the world and the Hereafter, and is left with nothing but a losing transaction.

Fortunate are those who attain the best way for their life through their steadfastness, advance to the highest ranks and enter the garden of bliss on the wings of their patience and gratitude. This is Allah’s bounty, He grants it to whomever He wills.

INTRODUCTION

As faith consists of two parts: steadfastness and thankfulness, it is therefore necessary for a person, who wishes good for himself, desires safety for his soul and hopes for the best for it, to never abandon these two basic qualities and not to deviate from these two straight paths. He should proceed towards Allah, treading these two paths, in order to be placed among the best group from among those who meet Him on that Day.

This book is written to highlight the necessity and the pressing need to pursue these two qualities and to illustrate that happiness in this world and the Hereafter is dependent on them. It is intended to be a comprehensive, extensive and useful book. It contains a great amount of useful information, which is worthy of being held firmly and clung to vigorously. It is pleasing to the reader, plain to him who reads it thoroughly, engaging to the distressed, stimulating for the neglectful one, and encouraging for the one who is ready to work. It also contains points of benefit from the exegesis of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) duly referred to their sources, reports from pious predecessors with references, juristic issues supported by evidence, and indications to the spiritual path. All these will be obvious to the one who contemplates over it and is endowed with a sound intellect.

The book deals with the various forms of patience and gratitude. It offers a decisive answer to the debate about who is better: the grateful rich person or the steadfast poor person. It exposes the real face of the world and cites the similitudes stated by Allah, His Messenger and the pious predecessors.

The reality of these similitudes and their conformity with actual situations are also discussed. What is praiseworthy and what is blameworthy of the worldly matters, what brings a person closer to Allah and what takes him away from Him are all elaborated on; what makes a person miserable and what makes him happy in this world –all these are dealt with along with many other useful discussions that are rarely found in other books.

It is an undeniable favor and a gift from Allah to the author, His servant. This book can be seen as suitable for kings and commanders, rich and poor, ascetics and jurists. It will prompt a person who is sitting to rise up and march forth, entertain the traveler on his path and guide the follower on the spiritual path to his destination. Yet it is the effort of one who is destitute and needy himself, who gives warning in it against the illness from which he himself is suffering. He prescribed the medicine but he did not take it regularly due to his own wrongdoing and ignorance. He hopes that the Noblest of the nobles and the most Compassionate of the compassionate will forgive him for his adventure of embarking on giving advice to His believing servants.

All that is correct in this book is from Allah alone and He alone is praiseworthy and the source of help. Whatever is wrong in it is from its author and from Satan; Allah and His Messenger are free from it.

The scanty capital of its author is brought to you and his commodity is presented to you, to the reader goes its benefit and to its author its harm. His ideas are transmitted to you. If they reach a noble honorable person he will feel happy, otherwise it will be like a young woman given to a handicapped and impotent person.

I have arranged it in 26 chapters along with a conclusion. They are:

Chapter one:

The dictionary meaning of sabr (patience), its etymology and conjugation.

Chapter two:

The real essence of Sabr and the views of people concerning it.

Chapter three:

The names of Sabr as regards its connections.

Chapter four:

Difference between Sabr, tasubbur, istibar and musabarah.

Chapter five:

The types of Sabr, concerning its objects.

Chapter six:

Its types in accordance with its strength, weakness and its ability or inability to counter the army of one's desire.

Chapter seven:

Its type in relation to its connections.

Chapter eight:

Its categories concerning its connection with the five categories of rules.

Chapter nine:

The different levels of Sabr.

Chapter ten:

Its division into the praiseworthy and blameworthy.

Chapter eleven:

The difference between the Sabr of the nobles and that of the lowly.

Chapter twelve:

The measures that help in exercising Sabr.

Chapter thirteen:

Affirmation that human beings can never be free from exercising Sabr.

Chapter fourteen:

The hardest of Sabr is on the self.

Chapter fifteen:

Texts from the Holy Book concerning Sabr.

Chapter sixteen:

Texts of the sunnah concerning it.

Chapter seventeen:

The statements of the Companions about the virtue of Sabr.

Chapter eighteen:

Discussion of matters connected with calamity like crying, yelling, tearing of the clothes, uttering unIslamic words and so on.

Chapter nineteen:

Sabr is half of faith, as faith is made up of two parts: Sabr and Shukr.

Chapter twenty:

Argument about which one is the best: Sabr or Shukr.

Chapter twenty one:

Judgment between the two groups and clearing the case.

Chapter twenty two:

Dispute among the people as to who is better: the thankful rich or steadfast poor; Judgment of the case.

Chapter twenty three:

The citations forwarded by the poor from the Book, the sunnah, the reports and logical deduction to support their claims.

Chapter twenty four:

The argument of the rich by quotations from the Book, the sunnah, the reports and analogy.

Chapter twenty five:

Matters that are opposite, damaging or contradicting steadfastness.

Chapter twenty six:

Sabr as one of the attributes of the Lord, as He is called al-Sabur and al-Shakur.

I named the book 'Uddat as-Sabirin wa Dhakhirat ash-Shakirin. I pray to Allah to make it purely for His sake and as a means to gain His closeness and good pleasure; to enable its author, the scribe and the reader to benefit from it. He certainly hears the supplication, and is the source of hope. He is sufficient for us and is the best supporter.

Chapter One: The dictionary meaning of the word Sabr and its derivation and conjugation

The original meaning of this word is: “to prevent and to subdue or arrest”. Thus, Sabr means to restrain the soul from worry, control the tongue from complaining and restrain parts of the body from striking the face, tearing the clothes and so on.

Allah says (what means):

“Restrain yourself with those who call upon their Lord.” (18/28)

Antarah said:

“I restrained for this (hard work) a free soul that knew and kept steadfast when the soul of the coward was shaken; i.e., I restrained a soul that was aware of the consequences. It was the soul of a free proud man, not the soul of a slave without pride. It remained calm when the soul of a cowardly person was shaken.”

In a Hadeeth regarding a man who held someone while another person killed him, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘The killer will be killed and the one who held [the victim] will be held in custody’, meaning, until his death.

Sabr is the word used when a person is held and detained for being killed. In an authentic narration, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘Whoever commits perjury to appropriate the property of a Muslim will meet Allah while He will turn away from him.’

In another report, the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade Masburah,, i.e., a goat or a chicken that is tied and shot until it dies.

It is said that the original meaning of the word is strength and power. The word Sabr, for a herb which is very bitter and distasteful, is derived from this. The word Subr is also taken from this meaning, and applies to a fertile land, because of its hardness and firmness.

A third view is that its meaning is “to collect and to gather”. Hence, Saabir is a person who holds himself up and keeps his soul away from worries and anxiety.

Actually, the word Sabr embraces all the three meanings: to restrain, to find strength and to pull oneself together.

The word is used in the first form (Sabr) to refer to being steadfast, in the fifth form (Tasabbur) to imply to try and attempt to be steadfast, in the eighth form (Istibar) to indicate making the effort to acquire steadfastness, in the third form (Musabarah) to mean holding someone in the state of steadfastness and in the second form (Tasbir) to imply to encourage someone to exercise Sabr.

Chapter Two: The real essence of Sabr and the scholars' views concerning it

The real essence of Sabr is that it is one of the noble qualities of the soul that prevents a person from doing what is reprehensible and unacceptable. It is one of the forces of the soul by which the soul's affairs are maintained and its condition kept stable.

Al-Junayd bin Muhammad was asked about it and his answer was that it was: "to swallow bitterness without showing any sign of a frown."

Thun-Noon says: 'It is to keep away from violations, to remain calm when experiencing the hardship of a calamity, and to demonstrate affluence, even if poverty is affecting one's life.'

It is has also been defined as: "remaining steadfast in distress, with noble character."

Another meaning is: "to be self sufficient in tribulation without complaint."

Abu 'Uthman explained the word as-Sabbaar as: "a person who has trained himself to meet any adversity."

Another scholar said: "Sabr is to show as good the same attitude in adversity as shown in prosperity", meaning that a person has a duty to show devotion to Allah when experiencing prosperity or tribulation. He should be thankful to Allah for his prosperity and be steadfast when afflicted with adversity.

'Amr bin 'Uthman al-Makki said: "Sabr is to remain steadfast with Allah and accept any trial from Him with composure and magnanimity." The sense is that one should receive afflictions with an open heart and seek to avoid expressing annoyance, irritation or complaint.

Al-Khawwas stated: "Sabr is to remain patient on the rulings of the Quran and the Sunnah."

Ruwaym defined Sabr as not resorting to complaint. He defined it with its outcome.

Someone else said that Sabr means to seek the help of Allah.

Abu Ali said that Sabr was what its name implied.

Ali bin Abi Talib stated that Sabr is a mount that never stumbles.

Abu Muhammad al-Jariri said: "Sabr means that a person should be indifferent to the states of favor and adversity, his heart remaining in peace in both conditions."

I say that it is neither possible nor was it commanded. Allah has given people the ability to distinguish between these two conditions. What a man is capable of doing is to restrain himself from worrying, but not to remain the same in both conditions. The capacity for well-being is wider in a person than that of steadfastness. This is attested by the saying of the Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in his well-known supplication: "(O Allah!) If you are not angry with me, then I do not care, yet wellbeing, granted by You, is better for me."

This does not contradict the Prophet's statement that no one is granted a gift better and more comprehensive than patience. This applies in a state of affliction or calamity. In that condition, nothing is broader than steadfastness. However, to be in a state of wellbeing is preferable.

Abu Ali al-Daqqaq asserted: The definition of patience is that a person does not question the decree. Speaking about calamity without complaining is not in contradiction with steadfastness. Allah, the Exalted, said about Prophet Ayyoob (peace be upon him) (what means):

“We found him to be steadfast.” (38/44)

He described him as such, despite his saying (what means): “Affliction has touched me.” (21/83)

Here ad-Daqqaq has explained the word with its required result. His statement that speaking about a calamity should be without complaint needs further illustration. There are two types of complaints:

First: To complain to Allah, which is not inconsistent with patience -- as Prophet Ya’qoob (peace be upon him) said (what means):

“I complain my distress and sorrow to Allah.” (12/86)

At the same time, he also said (what means):

“So, beautiful endurance is most becoming.” (12/18, 83)

Ayyoob (peace be upon him) said (what means): “Affliction has touched me” (21/83), nevertheless, Allah credited him with endurance.

The master of the patient people, may Allah’s blessing and peace be upon him, said: “O Allah! I complain to you about my weakness of power and lack of means.”

Moosa (peace be upon him) prayed: “O Allah! For you is praise; to you is the complaint. You are the One whose help is sought for and you are the One to whom the supplication for support is made. On You we are reliant. There is no power, no strength except with You.”

Second: The second type of complaint is the one made by the affected person by words or actions. This is not compatible with patience; rather it opposes it, and is detrimental to it.

There is then a difference between complaining to a person and complaining to Allah. We will deal with this issue later in the chapter of ‘combination and separation of complaint and steadfastness’ if Allah wills.

Another meaning for Sabr is ‘the courage of the soul’.

From this comes the saying: Courage is an hour’s steadfastness.

It is also said that steadfastness is steadiness of the heart in a situation of commotion.

Steadfastness and anxiety are opposites, which is why they are used against one another. Allah, the Exalted, cites a saying of the people in Hell (which means):

“It makes no difference whether we show anxiety or steadfastness. There is no escape for us.” (14/21)

Anxiety is the partner to and the helper of incapability, while steadfastness is the companion and essence of competence. If anxiety were to be asked: Who is your father? It would reply: Incapability. On the other hand if competence was asked: Who is your father? It would reply: Steadfastness.

The soul is the steed of a person on which he rides to Paradise or Hell. Steadfastness is like the noseband and reins for it; without them, it would wander in any direction.

Al-Hajjaj is reported to have said in one of his sermons: “Restrain these souls as they are eager to commit every evil act. May Allah have mercy on a man who has fixed a halter and a rein to his soul. He leads it by its noseband to the obedience of Allah and turns it away by its reins from disobedience of Allah. Restraining oneself from the prohibitions of Allah is easier than suffering from His torment.”

I add: The soul has two forces: the force to proceed and the force to restrain. The true quality of steadfastness is to direct the force to proceed towards what is useful and restrain the force from that which is harmful. Some power of control of people over doing what is good, and their firmness on it, is greater than refraining from what is bad and harmful. They are able to endure the hardship of performing good deeds, but have no control over their motives of lust and become involved in what is forbidden. There are others whose power of control over violation is stronger than their endurance to the hardship of doing good deeds, and there those who have no control over either.

The best person is he who is capable of controlling himself in both situations. It is observed that there are many people who endure persistently the hardship of keeping vigil in the night in both cold and hot weather, and observing the fast, but they are unable to control themselves from gazing at prohibited objects. There are others who restrain their gaze and do not pay attention to images, yet are unable to carry out the duty of commanding the good and prohibiting evil, or struggling against unbelievers and hypocrites. They are utterly powerless and incapable of undertaking these tasks. Most people lack the determination of doing one or the other. Very few have the ability to be steadfast in both circumstances.

It is said: ‘Steadfastness is the control of the rule of intelligence and religion against the desire to fulfill one’s lust and passion.’

This means that the natural disposition of man is to incline towards what is desirable, but the motives generated by intelligence and religion are opposed to it. The battle between the two continues and success alternates. The battlefield of this war is the heart of a human being and the weapons are steadfastness, courage and firmness.

Chapter Three: Names of Sabr, in relation to its object

Commendable steadfastness is that which emanates from the free will of the mind to resist the incentive of reprehensible desire, thus, different names are given to it in relation to its application. Restraint from unlawful sexual desire is called chastity ('Iffah), and its opposite is immorality, adultery and prostitution.

If one controls oneself from the desires of the stomach in rushing to eat or taking what is not proper it is called dignity and satiation, their opposites being greediness, gluttony and meanness.

Refraining from the disclosure of secret talks is known as keeping a secret, and its opposites are announcement, dissemination, accusation, abomination, abuse, lies or defamation.

When applied to the control of one's excesses in life it is called Zuhd (abstinence), and its opposite is greed.

If it is applied to describe the contentment of what is enough of the worldly materials, it is known as contentment (Qana'ah). Its opposite is greed.

Refraining from acting in anger it is called forbearance (Hilm), its opposite being recklessness.

Not acting in haste is called dignity and steadiness, and the opposites are foolishness and fickleness.



If it is used to indicate the control needed to prevent oneself from fleeing and running away (from dangerous situations), it is known as bravery, and its opposites are cowardice and weakness.

When used against the call of revenge it is pardon and forgiveness, and the opposites are vengefulness and punishment.

When used against the reason of avarice and stinginess it is generosity, and the opposite is miserliness.

To refrain from the desire of food and drink at a stated time it is called fasting.

When used to resist the urge for inability and indolence it is shrewdness.

If used to resist the cause of putting the burden on others and running away from sharing their burdens it is called manliness.

Therefore, it has a special name with every act and situation to which it is applied. The word that encompasses all these situations is Sabr (patience; steadfastness).

It also indicates that all the stages of the religion from the beginning to the end are linked with it. That is why it is called fairness when it is linked with fair dealing between two similar things and its opposite is injustice. When related to completing obligatory and desirable acts out of free will and choice it is called magnanimity. In this fashion, all religious acts are linked with it.

Chapter Four: Difference between Sabr, Tasabbur, Istibar, and Musabarah

The differences in the usage of these words depend upon the condition of a person within himself and his relationship with others. If keeping away and restraining himself from responding to the call of performing whatever is not good is natural and inborn in him it is Sabr. If he does it with difficulty and must force himself to undertake it, then it is Tasabbur. The latter comes from the fifth form, which indicates the efforts that are made to do the work.

Here are some other words with the same indication: Tahallum (to pretend to be forbearing), Tashajju' (to try to be brave), Takarrum (to try to be generous), Tahammul (to work to bear), etc.

When a person forces himself to acquire the quality of steadfastness and practices it regularly, it becomes a natural part of his character. The Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever forces himself to endure, Allah will make him steadfast."

Similarly, when a person makes an effort to become chaste, chastity becomes natural to him. Other qualities may be acquired in the same fashion. Whether moral qualities that can be acquired through endeavour or forcing oneself to certain behavior or can ever become natural disposition, is disputed among the scholars. A poet said: "The heart is pressed to forget you, but the natural disposition refuses to change."

Another one said: "O the one who adorns himself with qualities other than his own, the effort produces character."

Another person said: "The ignominy of making effort to acquire a particular habit is the indication of natural disposition."

Some believe that Allah, the Exalted, has completed the work of creation, bestowing good disposition, provision and the time of death to everyone.

However, others believe that it is possible to acquire a good character. Understanding, clemency, generosity, benevolence and bravery can all be acquired, as is evidenced from many people.

It is also said that constant practice leads to a natural disposition. This means that when a person regularly does something, becomes used to it and trains himself by continuously doing it, it becomes a habit and a natural disposition for him. Habits change one's nature. A person continues to make the effort to exercise patience until it becomes natural for him. In the same way, forbearance, dignity, tranquillity and firmness become part of the innate character of a person when he continually tries to adopt them.

They assert that Allah, the Almighty has created in human beings the potential for learning and adapting. Transformation of the natural disposition is not impossible. However, this transformation may be fragile, and the person may revert to his innate nature for the slightest reason. Although strong, it is not complete and when there is a powerful cause, the person may return to his former habits. In some cases, however, the transformation is so firm that the newly acquired character becomes second nature for a person and it becomes almost impossible for him to revert to his former character.

Istibar, a degree higher than Tasabbur, is the effort of exercising steadfastness when acquiring something by effort. As the effort of earning leads to an income, so the effort of acquiring steadfastness leads to becoming steadfast, and when repeated regularly, results in acquiring that quality.

The word Musabarah implies an encounter with an enemy in the field of endeavour. It is the third form of the verb that requires two parties to engage in something like abusing or striking one another. Allah, the Almighty says (what means):

“O believers! Persevere in patience, vie in such perseverance, strengthen each other and be conscious of Allah that you may succeed.” (3/200)

In this verse, the Almighty commanded the believers to exercise patience. This is the state of a patient person within himself. He ordered them to compete against each other, and with the enemy. He further asked them to remain steadfast, to be firm and constant in the state of steadfastness while vying with one another in it. This indicates that a person may show steadfastness, but he may be unable to outdo others. At other times, a person may be able to compete without being constant. He may be doing all three without dedicating himself to Allah consciously. Thus, Allah asserted that the basis of all these things is consciousness of Him and any success is attached to it.

Murabatah means to station oneself on a frontier from which the danger of attack is expected, but it also implies watching over the frontier of the heart, to stop attacks from desires and the devil, both seeking to take control of it.