



4. Proper Optimism

Delivered by His Eminence
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All praise is due to Allaah. He created all things according to the measure He decreed, He regulates all matters pertaining to His servants in accordance with His wisdom, and He has complete knowledge about even the most minute of details concerning them. I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah alone, without any partner. All dominion and praise belong to Him alone, and He is completely able to do all things. I further testify that Muhammad is Allaah's worshipping servant and Messenger. Allaah sent him ahead of the Final Hour as a bearer of glad tidings, a warner, a caller to Allaah by His permission, and a radiant lamp of guidance. May Allaah grant an abundance of His commendation, protection, and blessings to His Messenger as well as to the Messenger's family, Companions, and all who continue to follow their path until the Day of Recompense.

Dear people of eemaan (i.e. those who have sound beliefs and righteous deeds), you must observe taqwaa of Allaah as He rightfully deserves [by fulfilling His commands and avoiding His prohibitions]. Remember that He always sees and hears you whether you are in public or private, and He knows everything that you conceal. "People of eemaan, observe taqwaa of Allaah. Every soul must examine what it has prepared for tomorrow. Observe taqwaa of Allaah, as He is completely acquainted with all that you do."¹

Dear Ummah of Islam, there is a praiseworthy trait which prompts people to be pleased and hopeful, and brings happiness to the heart. This happens because it is a trait which entails expecting the best from Allaah and placing full reliance upon Him. It is the trait of proper optimism and good expectations about the future regardless of how adverse circumstances become or how drawn out they may be. An individual with sound optimism remains pleased with Allaah, maintains sound beliefs about Allaah's decree, thinks the best about Allaah's judgment, and knows that Allaah – who is perfect in every way – will reward him for his perseverance and facing adversities correctly. "You may dislike something when it is actually good for you, and you may like something when it is actually bad for you. Ultimately, Allaah has complete knowledge of all things while you do not have such knowledge."²

Dear people of eemaan, when we examine the lives of Allaah's Prophets and Messengers, we find clear manifestations of proper optimism regarding being granted their Lord's support, having adversities removed, and having their respective peoples accept Allaah's guidance. The Prophet Nooh spent nine hundred and fifty years among his people calling them to Allaah and he did not lose hope due to their rejection. Additionally, after the Prophet Ya'qoob spent many years without seeing his son Yoosuf, he told the other sons,

﴿يَبْنَى اَذْهَبُوا فَحَسَسُوا مِنْ يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ وَلَا تَأْتِسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ
إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْتِسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْفَوْمُ الْكُفْرُونَ﴾

¹ Soorah al-Hashr (59):18.

² Soorah al-Baqarah (2):216.



“My sons, go back to Egypt, try your best to find out anything you can about Yoosuf and his brother, and do not ever despair of Allaah’s mercy. Indeed, no one loses hope in Allaah except a people who reject Him.”³

In addition, there was the leader of Allaah’s Messengers and the role model for the optimistic. He was the best of people in perseverance, hope, and optimism. When he was sent with the light of Islam, he was harmed by the nearest of people to him. They expelled him from the most beloved land to him, belied him, and fought against him. Throughout that all, he maintained his trust in his Lord’s support, and remained optimistic about his Lord’s religion spreading to the ends of the Earth.

In ibn Sa’d’s work entitled at-Tabaqaat, there is a narration which mentions that when the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) had left at-Taa’if, he stopped for some days at a place called Nakhlah. Zayd ibn Haarithah asked, “How will you return to them?” – referring to Quraysh – “after they expelled you?” He replied, “Zayd, Allaah will indeed grant relief and a way out of what you are witnessing. Allaah will indeed support His religion and enable His Prophet to prevail.” Thus, the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) nurtured within the hearts of his Companions proper optimism, hope, good expectations of Allaah, reliance upon Him, and hope in Him.

We find in Saheeh al-Bukhaaree that the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) addressed ‘Adee ibn Haatim, who was unsure about accepting Islam at the time. He told him, “ ‘Adee, have you seen the region known as al-Heerah⁴?” He replied, “I have not seen it but I have been informed of it.” The Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, “If you live for much longer, you will certainly see that a woman will be able to travel from al-Heerah all the way until she reaches the Ka’bah and performs Tawaaf. She will do that all with nothing to fear except Allaah. If you live for much longer, the treasures of Kisraa⁵ will indeed be conquered.” ‘Adee asked, “Are you referring to Kisraa ibn Hurmuz?” He replied, “Yes, Kisraa ibn Hurmuz. If you live for much longer, you will indeed see a time when a man will set out with a hand full of gold or silver, looking for someone who would accept it from him, yet find none who will take it.” ‘Adee (may Allaah be pleased with him) later told others with him, “I have seen the time come in which a woman is able to travel from al-Heerah all the way until she reaches the Ka’bah and performs Tawaaf, doing that all with nothing to fear except Allaah. In addition, I myself was among the people who conquered the treasures of Kisraa ibn Hurmuz. Furthermore, if you people live for much longer, you will undoubtedly see the other things which Abul-Qaasim, the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection), had mentioned.”⁶

My dear brothers who have eemaan, optimism and hoping for good entail expecting the best from Allaah and placing full trust in Him. They urge a person to perform deeds. In fact, they urge a person to perform deeds in the best way. This is precisely why optimism filled the life of our Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection), and why he nurtured it within the souls of his noble Companions. He instilled it by both word and deed. If he heard a pleasing name or word, he felt happy and also felt encouragement to proceed with anything he intended to do. He did that due to hope in Allaah and expecting the best from Him. Anas ibn Maalik (may Allaah be pleased with him) narrated that if the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) set out to get something done,

³ Soorah Yoosuf (12):87.

⁴ An area in Iraq near the city of al-Koofah.

⁵ The ruler of the Persian empire.

⁶ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree (3595).



he liked it when heard someone being referred to as Raashid (someone soundly guided) or Najeeh (someone successful).” This was collected by at-Tirmithee with a saheeh chain of narration.⁷

The Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) once heard someone say something he liked so he told the person, “We feel optimistic due to the good words that you uttered.” This was collected by Aboo Daawood with a saheeh chain of narration.⁸

In addition, when the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) reached al-Madeenah after his journey of migration, he stopped at an elevated location, optimistically hoping that Allaah’s religion would attain elevation and prominence. Furthermore, part of his guidance when he prayed for rain was to turn his upper garment over after his sermon, optimistically hoping that Allaah would turn circumstances around for the people and change conditions of drought to ones of fertility.

There are similar instances in relation to names. The name Suhayl implies ease. Thus, when Suhayl ibn ‘Amr came to al-Hudaybiyah to negotiate a truce, the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) optimistically told the Companions with him, “Things will become easy for you.”⁹ In the end, things happened just as he had hoped, and Suhayl coming resulted in much goodness for Islam and its people.

The Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) would even change a person’s name if it was at odds with optimism. We find in Saheeh Muslim that there was a daughter of ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) who was called ‘Aasiyah¹⁰ (disobedient). Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) named her Jameelah (nice, or beautiful).¹¹

During the era of ignorance prior to Islam, al-Madeenah was called Yathrib which is a word that does not have a good meaning. As a result, the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) changed it to Taabah and Taybah (fine, good, or wholesome). Thus, it will remain with those qualities until the end of this world.

We also find a narration from ibn al-Musayyib in Saheeh al-Bukhaaree stating that his grandfather went to the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) who asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “Hazn (rough and crude).” The Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said to him, “You are Sahl (easy and refined).” However, he replied, “I would not change the name that my father gave me.” Ibn al-Musayyib commented, “Roughness and crudeness remained among us afterwards.”¹²

Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allaah have mercy upon him) remarked that the optimism which the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) liked was when he would do something, or have the resolve to do it, while placing full trust in Allaah; and then hear a word or name that gave him hope. That included things like Najeeh (successful), Muflih (prosperous), Sa’eed (fortunate), Mansoor (supported or victorious), and so on.¹³

The Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) hoped for good, liked for good things to happen, and was optimistic when he heard good things. On one hand, he disliked unpleasant words but he was not pessimistic due to them, and on the other, he liked pleasant words and was optimistic due to them. In the Two Saheeh collections, we find that the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) said, “There is no contagion, and nothing to be pessimistic about from superstition, such as the direction in which a bird flies. However, I do like optimism.” This

⁷ Jaami’ at-Tirmithee (1616). Graded saheeh by al-Albaanee.

⁸ Sunan Abee Daawood (3917). Graded saheeh by al-Albaanee.

⁹ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree (2731).

¹⁰ With the letter ‘ayn at the beginning, then alif, then saad.

¹¹ Saheeh Muslim (2139).

¹² Saheeh al-Bukhaaree (6190).

¹³ Majmoo’ al-Fataawaa (23/66).



optimism refers to hearing a pleasant word. Thus, the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) disliked pessimism, superstitions, and any sort of negative outlook. He had even stated, “If a person says that the people are all destroyed, he himself is the one who will face the worst destruction among them.” This was collected by Muslim.¹⁴ That means that such a person will be the worst among them due to his pessimism, his despair, his contempt for others, and his pride about himself.

Despair, loss of hope, and pessimism are blameworthy traits. They weaken a person’s eemaan; incur the anger of Allaah, the Most Merciful; and lead to regrets. When someone does not hope for the best from Allaah and he expresses that with his words, that person will be taken to account for his negative expectations and words. In Saheeh al-Bukhaaree, we find that ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with both of them) narrated that the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) once visited a bedouin who was ill and said to him, “May no harm come to you. The illness will be a means of purification, if Allaah wills.” The bedouin replied, “Purification you say?! On the contrary, it is intense fever that is blazing upon an old man and it will take him to his grave.” The Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) replied, “If that is what you want for yourself, it will be that way.”¹⁵ Ibn Hajar (may Allaah have mercy upon him) commented in Fath al-Baaree that the bedouin had passed away by the next morning.

Servants of Allaah, trust in your Lord, place your full reliance upon Him, hope in Him, expect the best of His guidance and support, and maintain correct beliefs about His decree. When a person trusts in his Lord completely, expects the best from Him, remains optimistic about what lies ahead, and does his utmost to achieve his aims, he will be an individual who treads the path to success with a tranquil heart permeated with sound beliefs, and a soul that is pleased with its Most Merciful Lord. Adversities would only increase him in hope, optimism, and reliance upon his Lord. In an authentic hadeeth, the Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection) told ibn ‘Abbaas, “You must realize that victory comes with perseverance, that relief comes with adversity, and that with every difficulty there will be ease.”¹⁶ Allaah said,

﴿الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدَ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَآخَظَهُمْ فَزَادَهُمُ إِيمَانًا
وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ ﴿١٧٣﴾ فَأَنْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ
لَّمْ يَمَسَّهُمْ شُؤٌّ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٧٤﴾﴾

“They were the ones whom the mushrikoon told, ‘People have gathered against you in order to wipe you out. Therefore, fear them.’ However, that increased them in eemaan, and they said, ‘Allaah is sufficient for us and He is the best upon whom we rely.’ As a result, they returned with blessings and favour from Allaah. They were not harmed, they did what pleased Allaah, and Allaah grants immense bounty to the people of eemaan.”¹⁷

May Allaah bless us all by the Qur’aan and Sunnah, and may He enable us to glean benefit from the evidences and wisdom they contain. I say this much and I implore Allaah to forgive me and all of you. Thus, ask His forgiveness since He is continually forgiving.



¹⁴ Saheeh Muslim (2623).

¹⁵ Saheeh al-Bukhaaree (3616).

¹⁶ Musnad al-Imaam Ahmad (2803). See also Silsilah al-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah (2382).

¹⁷ Soorah Aali ‘Imraan (3):173-174.



All praise is due to Allaah who directed us to Islam and led us to follow the guidance of the best individual among all of creation. Allaah is perfect in every way and He deserves that I praise Him and be grateful to Him for as long as night and day continue to alternate. I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah alone, without any partner. I further testify that our leader, the Prophet Muhammad, is Allaah's worshipping servant and Messenger. May Allaah grant His commendation, protection, and blessings to His Messenger as well as to the Messenger's family, Companions, and all who continue to follow their path until the Day of Recompense.

Dear people of eemaan, complete despair and loss of all hope are major sins. 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood (may Allaah be pleased with him) said, "The gravest of major sins are worshipping other than Allaah, feeling immune to the plot of Allaah, and despairing of Allaah's mercy." In the Qur'aan we find the statement,

﴿وَمَنْ يَقْنَطْ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ﴾

“Who could ever despair of his Lord's mercy except those who are astray?”¹⁸

Hence, people who populate regions and construct civilizations are the ones who have the most optimism and hope. As for those who remain pessimistic, they do not successfully populate any region or build any civilization. A key factor that fosters proper optimism is strengthening sound beliefs in one's heart. That does not come about without knowing Allaah's sublime names and attributes, reading Allaah's Book and contemplating its contents, believing Allaah's promises, mentioning Allaah much, performing many optional acts of worship, and contemplating the life of Allaah's Prophet (may Allaah grant him commendation and protection).

Servants of Allaah, you must continue to observe taqwa of Allaah, expect the best from Him, hope to attain the goodness that lies with Him, remain optimistic towards Him, and not let pessimism find any path into your heart. An authentic hadeeth states that Allaah, the Almighty and Most Majestic, said, "I am as My servant expects Me to be. Therefore, he may expect of Me whatever he wills."¹⁹ Al-Qurtubee commented in al-Mufhim that "as My servant expects Me to be" means that a servant is to expect that Allaah would answer his supplications, accept his repentance, grant him forgiveness when he seeks it, and reward him for the acts of worship he performs correctly. Thus, it is imperative for every individual to strive his utmost to fulfil all that is required of him, while remaining certain that when he does so, Allaah would accept his deeds and grant him forgiveness. Allaah has promised us that, and He does not go back on His promise. If a person presumes or firmly believes that Allaah would not accept his deeds or that the deeds will not avail him, that is tantamount to despairing of Allaah's mercy. That is a major sin and if a person dies with such an expectation, he will be left to what he expects. We seek refuge in Allaah from His wrath and punishment.

Our Lord, make us people who are grateful to You, who mention You, who have reverential fear of You, who are constantly obedient to You, who are constantly humble before You, and who are constantly repentant to You. Our Lord, accept our repentance, wash away our misdeeds, answer our prayers, make our proof firm, set our tongues aright, guide our hearts, and remove rancour from our chests.²⁰

¹⁸ Soorah al-Hijr (15):56.

¹⁹ Musnad al-Imaam Ahmad (16016, 16979). See also Silsilah al-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah (1663, 2012).

²⁰ See Sunan Abee Daawood (1510). Graded saheeh by al-Albaanee.



O Allaah, we indeed seek refuge with You from the disappearance of blessings You bestowed upon us, from change in the wellbeing You granted us, from being suddenly afflicted with Your wrath, and from all things that anger You.²¹

O Allaah, assist us in mentioning you, being grateful to You, and worshipping You in the best way.²²

O Allaah, grant Your commendation to Muhammad and to the family of Muhammad, just as You granted Your commendation to Ibraaheem and to the family of Ibraaheem. Indeed, You are Most Praiseworthy, Most Glorious. O Allaah, grant Your blessings Muhammad and to the family of Muhammad, just as You granted Your blessings to Ibraaheem and to the family of Ibraaheem. Indeed, You are Most Praiseworthy, Most Glorious.²³

²¹ See Saheeh Muslim (2739).

²² See Sunan Abee Daawood (1522). Graded saheeh by al-Albaanee.

²³ See Saheeh al-Bukhaaree (3370).