NECESSITY & BENEFITS
OF
TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS

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Trinidad (West Indies)

www.aaiil.org
This booklet is dedicated to the memory of the late PATRICIA ALI (Patsy) of 367 Cedar Hill Road, Claxton Bay, Trinidad.

Her husband and her children and grand-child believe that it was her prayers that gave her such a distinction among others and they hope and pray that this publication will help to inspire the love of prayers and the cheerful acceptance of the decrees of Allah in the hearts of all its readers.

BORN: 20th May, 1947
DIED: 9th August, 2003
Exhortation

Your presence is a present to the world.
You're unique and one of a kind.
Your life can be what you want it to be.
Take the days just one at a time.

Count your blessings, not your troubles.
You'll make it through whatever comes along.
Within you are so many answers.
Understand, have courage, be strong.

Realize that it's – never too late.
Do ordinary things in an extraordinary way.
Have health and hope and happiness.
Take the time to wish upon a star.

And don't forget...
for even a day...
how very special you are.
Family Members

Mr. Fazloodeen Ali : (Husband)

Mustaq Ali : (Eldest Son)

Nadia Halley : (Eldest Daughter)

Anis Ali : (Youngest Son)

Saida Ali : (Youngest Daughter)

Nazra Ali : (Mustaq's Wife)

Thomas Halley : (Nadia's Husband)

Adeeba Ali : (Mustaq's Daughter)

“We love you very much”

Innā lil-Lāhi wa inna ilaihi rāji‘ūn
From Allah we came and to Him we shall return.
A MUSLIM'S PRAYER

Allāh, Our Lord! Hidden and Manifest, Creator Supreme and Fashioner Superb! Thine is the world we know and Thine the worlds we know not. Thy mercy envelopes creation and Thy light dispels gloom. Burden us not with what we cannot bear and forgive us when we err.

Let us not squander Thy bounty and lose hope in Thy loving beneficence. Unto Thee we flee and cry in anguish. Hold us close when our feet and head fail and lead us with the righteous to victory. Why should we grieve and fear when Thou art near and why should we complain against Thy decree when we know not what Thou hast prepared for us? Ignorant as we are, we know not the joy that may lie hidden in sorrow and the sorrow that may lurk in joy.

We pray for those who have gone before us and beseech Thy forgiveness for our parents, in whose loving care we grew. Informed with wisdom let us grow in knowledge that comes from Thee. Suffer us not to envy the pleasures that others have and to languish in grief at the loss of what we have. Guard us against pride and lust and make us not vain and hypocritical. Let not passion make us wild and let not power blind us to the transient state of all that life offers.

Blessed is he who has surrendered his all unto Thee and who has won his peace in Thy pleasure. May our tears in constant remembrance of Thee sustain our hearts and bring deliverance! Bless us with the fullness of life on earth and when the time comes make us return unto Thee united in the fellowship of Thy loving ones. Lord! Grant us above all, we pray, the vision of Thy countenance that Thou hast promised for those who are Thine.
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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
We praise Him and ask for blessings on
His noble Prophet, Muhammad (saw).

Necessity and Benefits of Trials and Tribulations

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INTRODUCTION

The Holy Qur’an has told us that whether we are believers or unbelievers we are bound to face, at some time or the other, trials and tribulations, disappointments, failures, pain, anguish, frustration, fear, grief, anxiety, etc. This is plainly stated in many places of the Holy Qur’an, but here, one reference will suffice:

*If a wound has afflicted you, a wound like it has also afflicted the (disbelieving) people. And We bring these days to men by turns, that Allah may know those who believe and take witnesses from among you. And Allah loves not the wrongdoers, and that He may purge those who believe and deprive the disbelievers of blessings (3:139-140).*

It is therefore incumbent upon us to seek the root of our pains and to make the most creative use of the vicissitudes of life so as to bring out the latent faculties embedded in our nature. This booklet is a humble attempt in this direction and it is my prayer that it may be of benefit to those in whose hands Allah wills it to fall.

Allah, Most High, tells us in the Holy Qur’an:

*We created man to face difficulties (90:4).*

That is the law of Allah, Who, in His infinite wisdom, ordained a life of struggle and hardship for us but not out of pique, or as punishment for some alleged original sin by our ancestors. For, with a modicum of reflection, we can all see that without afflictions, setbacks, disappointments or challenges, there can be no human progress in any field of endeavour, whether physical, moral, intellectual or spiritual.

Further, the Holy Qur’an tells us that man is created weak and helpless (4:26) and paradoxically, it is only because of this weakness in his nature that he has the opportunity to rise to immeasurable heights, for he has recourse to the highest and most powerful Helper of all – Allah, Himself (27:62).

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, ex-
plains it beautifully as follows:

“So far as the weakness of man is concerned, it is almost limitless. He cannot move even one step without the grace and help of God.... He, being a target of so many weaknesses, can find security only in being honest and sincere with God. It is quite true that somebody may acquire a temporary gain by telling lies, but that is sure to blacken his heart and his is eaten up from within as the white ants consume things from inside.... Nobody can do anything without the grace and help of God, but when a man is drawn towards Him and gets himself immersed in His Being, then he performs the kind of deeds that can be called God's work and then he is bathed in luminous and lustrous lights” (Malfuzat, vol. 1, p. 352).

In another place, he warns us that difficulties that are apt to befall man are more numerous than ants, and so he advises us to be cautious, develop taqwa (piety) and every hour of the day be engaged in supplication and remembrance of Allah and seeking His forgiveness. Remember, when we fall down to Allah in utter helplessness, He hears us and responds, as He asks rhetorically:

Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil, and will make you successors in the earth? Is there a god with Allah? Little is it that you mind! Or, Who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea, and Who sends the winds as good news before His mercy? Is there a god with Allah? Exalted be Allah above what they associate (with Him)! Or, Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and Who gives you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? Is there a god with Allah? Bring your proof, if you are truthful(27:62-64).

In verse 62 above, Allah has given the promise that this little, insignificant, weak, helpless creature, if he calls upon Him with sincerity, will be elevated to the position of the vicegerent on earth, not a nominal, potential or a priori Khalifa, but an active, self-actualised, beneficial one. In other words, a muttaqi (righteous person) and a muhsin (doer of good to others).
From the Holy Qur’an

The following are some other verses of the Holy Qur’an dealing with the necessity for afflictions in the life of man. These are followed by a few ahadith on the same subject and some others on the necessity for making taubah (repentance) and istighfar (seeking forgiveness).

Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and will not be tried? And indeed We tried those before them, so Allah will certainly know those who are true and He will know the liars (29:2-3).

And whoever strives hard, strives for himself. Surely Allah is Self-sufficient, above (need of His) creatures. And those who believe and do good, We shall certainly do away with their afflictions and reward them for the best of what they did (29:6-7).

Or do you think that you will enter the Garden, while there has not yet befallen you the like of what befell those who have passed away before you. Distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently, so that the Messenger and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allah come? Now surely the help of Allah is nigh! (2:214).

You will certainly be tried in your property and your persons. And you will certainly hear from those who have been given the Book before you and from the idolaters much abuse (3:185).

Every soul must taste of death. And We test you by evil and good by way of trial. And to Us you are returned (21:35).

And We divided them in the earth into parties – some of them are righteous and some of them are otherwise. And We tried them with blessings and misfortunes that they might turn (7:168).

And certainly We shall try you, till We know those among you who strive hard, and the steadfast...(47:31).

Wherever you are, death will overtake you, though you are in towers, raised high. And if good befalls them they say: This is from Allah; and if a misfortune befalls them they say: This is from thee. Say: All is from Allah.
But what is the matter with these people that they make no effort to understand anything? Whatever good befalls thee (O man), it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls thee, it is from thyself. And We have sent thee (O Prophet) to mankind as a Messenger. And Allah is sufficient as a witness (4:78-79).

If a wound has afflicted you, a wound like it has also afflicted the (disbelieving) people. And We bring these days to men by turns, that Allah may know those who believe and take witnesses from among you. And Allah loves not the wrongdoers, and that He may purge those who believe and deprive the disbelievers of blessings. Do you think that you will enter the Garden while Allah has not yet known those from among you who strive hard (nor) known the steadfast? (3:139-140).

The prophets of Allah showed the world the face of Allah; without them, no one would have known anything of the Creator. Not only did they suffer the most tribulations, pain, humiliation, etc. but they gave us living examples of the type of endurance and fortitude we must inculcate if we are to consider ourselves Muslims and more so, mu'mins (believers). Merely from their prayers to Allah we gain a deep insight into their utter resignation to, and their trust and hope in Allah, Most High, and their creative approach to every situation in life.

Here are a few examples, to which, if we pay deeper attention and meditate on, will help us to remove the tightness and heaviness of heart, the fear, grief, anxiety, despondency and even the rage of heart and furnish us with a guide to peace and tranquillity through spiritual advancement:

Prayers of the Prophets

1. Prayer of Prophet Adam and his wife, Eve, after having approached the forbidden tree: They said: Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers (7:23).

2. Prayer of Prophet Jonah when he left his people in wrath and fell into distress: And Dhu-l-Nun, when he went away in wrath, and he thought that We would not straiten him, so he called out among afflictions:
There is no god but Thou, glory be to Thee! Surely I am of the sufferers of loss (21:87).

3. Prayer of Prophet Job when afflicted in both family and property: And Job, when he cried to his Lord: Distress has afflicted me! And Thou art the most Merciful of those who show mercy (21:83).

4. Prayer of Prophet Zacharias for a righteous son: A mention of the mercy of thy Lord, crying in secret. He said: My Lord, my bones are weakened, and my head flares with hoariness, and I have never been unsuccessful in my prayer to Thee, my Lord, and I fear my kinsfolk after me, and my wife is barren, so grant me from Thyself an heir who should inherit me and inherit of the Children of Jacob, and make him, my Lord, acceptable (to Thee) (19:2-6).

5. Prayer of Prophet Moses after fleeing from Pharaoh and reaching Midian: So, he watered (their sheep) for them, then went back to the shade, and said: My Lord, I stand in need of whatever good Thou mayest send to me (28:24).

6. Prayer of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) after he was rejected at Taif, abused and stoned: "O Lord, I make my complaint unto Thee of my helplessness and frailty and of my insignificance before mankind. But Thou art the Lord of the poor and feeble, and Thou art my Lord. Into whose hand wilt Thou abandon me? Into the hands of strangers that beset me round about? Or of the enemy Thou hast given at home to have the mastery over me? I seek refuge in the light of Thy countenance."

From the Hadith
As regards afflictions, the Hadith consoles us:

1. Lady Ayesha reported: "I did not see anybody on whom pain was more severe than on the Messenger of Allah."

2. "To whomsoever Allah intends good, he gets some afflictions from Him."
3. “There is no Muslim on whom a calamity of illness falls, or what is besides it, except that Allah drops his sins just as a tree drops its leaves.”

4. “No Muslim is afflicted by difficulty, continuous pain, anxiety, grief, injury, or care, or even by a thorn with which he is pierced, without Allah thereby making an atonement for his sins.”

5. The magnitude of reward goes along with the magnitude of the trial, and when the Almighty and Glorious loves a people, He puts them to trials. So whoever is pleased, there is pleasure for him, and whoever is displeased, there is displeasure for him.”

6. “When a Muslim is tried with a disease in his body, it is said to the angel: ‘Write for him the good actions he used to do.’ If He cures him, He washes him and purifies him (of all sins); and if He takes his life, He forgives him and shows mercy to him.”

7. “When the sins of a servant become too many and there is nothing of actions for him which may compensate for them, Allah tries him with grief that it may compensate for him.”

8. Allah said: By My Glory and Magnificence, I shall not take out anybody from this world whom I wish to forgive till I compensate for each of his sins hanging onto his neck, with a disease in his body and want in his provision.

9. “When Allah has previously decreed for a servant a rank which he has not attained by his actions, He afflicts him in his body, or in his wealth, or in his children, and he keeps patience over that, till He takes him to the abode which went in advance for him from Allah.”

10. “The Messenger of Allah was asked: ‘Who among men is the foremost in trouble?’ ‘Prophets,’ he replied, ‘then their followers and then their followers.’ “

11. “A man is tried in proportion to his religion. If he has firmness in religion, his disaster becomes severe, and if he has weakness in his religion, it becomes easy for him. He continues in that way till he walks upon the
11. “A man is tried in proportion to his religion. If he has firmness in religion, his disaster becomes severe, and if he has weakness in his religion, it becomes easy for him. He continues in that way till he walks upon the earth without sin.”

(The above *ahadith* were taken from Maulana Fazlul Karim’s translation of *Mishkat al-Masabih*, Book 1, section 7, chapter 111.)

12. “When a man’s child dies, Allah, Most High, asks His angels whether they have taken His servant’s child, and when they reply that they have, He then asks whether they have taken the fruit of his heart, and when they reply that they have, He asks what His servant said. On replying that he praised Allah and said: ‘To Allah we belong and to Him do we return,’ Allah says: *Build a house in Paradise for My servant and call it the House of Praise.*”

13. “If anyone comforts one who has been afflicted he will have a reward equivalent to his.”

14. “He who comforts a bereaved woman will be clothed with a striped garment in Paradise.”

The Holy Prophet (*sas*) is also reported to have said:

15. “No pair of Muslims will lose three of their children by death without Allah bringing them into Paradise by His great mercy.” He was asked if that applied if they lost two, and he said it did. He was also asked if it applied if they lost one, and he said it did.

16. Anas told that when the Prophet came upon a woman weeping at a grave he said: “Fear God and show endurance.” The woman, not recognising the Holy Prophet, replied: “Go away, for you have not been afflicted as I have.” When, later, she was told that he was the Prophet, she went to his door and said: “I did not recognise you.” He replied: “Endurance is shown only at the first blow” (Bukhari and Muslim).

17. “The believing man or woman continues to have affliction in person,
property and children so that they may finally meet God free from sin (Tirmidhi).

18. The Holy Prophet said that Allah said: “When I afflict a servant of Mine who is a believer and he praises me for the affliction I have brought upon him, he will rise from that couch of his as sinless as he was the day he mother gave him birth. I fettered and afflicted My servant, so record for him what you were recording for him when he was well.” (Ahmad)

19. “It is remarkable that everything turns out well for a believer while that applies only to a believer. If happiness befalls him he gives thanks and it turns out well for him, and if misfortune befalls him he shows endurance and it turns out well for him” (Muslim).

20. “The strong believer is better and dearer to God than the weak believer. In all that is good be eager for what benefits you, seek help in God, and do not be too weak to do so. If any affliction comes to you do not say: ‘If I had done such and such, such and such would have happened,” but say: “God decrees, and what He wishes He does,’ for ‘if I had’ provides an opening for the deeds of the devil” (Muslim).

21. “Part of the happiness of a son of Adam consists in his pleasure with what God has decreed for him, part of the misery of a son of Adam consists in his abandonment of asking God’s blessing, and part of the misery of a son of Adam consists in his displeasure with what God has decreed for him” (Muslim).

(The above hadith were taken from Robson’s translation of Mishkat al-Masabih.)

Regarding the necessity for and the beneficial and salutary effects of taubah (repentance) and istighfar (seeking forgiveness), the Holy Prophet (sas) admonishes and exhorts us in the following manner:
2. "By Him in Whose hand is my soul, if you had not sinned, Allah would have removed you and brought a people who sin, then ask Allah's pardon and are forgiven."

3. "All sons of Adam are sinners, but the best of sinners are those who are given to repentance."

4. "If anyone continually asks pardon, Allah will appoint for him a way out of every distress and a relief from every anxiety, and will provide for him from where he did not reckon."

5. "He who repents of a sin is like him who has committed no sin."

6. "A dead man in his grave is just like a drowning man calling for help, for he hopes that a supplication from a father, a mother, a brother or a friend may reach him, and when it does, it is dearer to him than the world and all it contains. Allah, Most High, brings to those who are in the graves blessings several times as great as the size of the mountains because of the supplication of those who are on earth. The gift of the living to the dead is to ask pardon for them."

7. "The best manner of asking pardon is to say: 'O Allah, Thou art my Lord. There is no god but Thee. Thou hast created me, and I am Thy servant and hold to Thy covenant and promise as much as I can. I seek refuge in Thee from the evil of what I have done. I acknowledge Thy favour to me, and I acknowledge my sin. Pardon me, for none but Thee pardons sins.'"

Lesson from the Qur’an
Let us now turn our attention to Mr. N.A. Faruqui’s dars-ul-Qur’an (lesson from the Qur’an) on 2:153-157 of the Holy Qur’an.

O you who believe, seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allah is with the patient. And speak not of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Nay, (they are) alive, but you perceive not. And We shall certainly try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give good
news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them say: Surely we are Allah’s and to Him we shall return. Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course.

These verses deal with the subject of suffering and the importance of patient perseverance in it, and for this reason I thought it important to include them in my lessons. The Holy Qur’an sheds light on the topic of trials and afflictions and tells us that they befall us in three ways.

Firstly, when any prophet comes, or now that prophethood has come to an end, when mujaddids or other commissioned ones make their appearance, then severe opposition is raised against them and their disciples, and attempts are even made on their lives. In short, affliction upon affliction of various kinds befall those who accept the truth.

Secondly, Allah, Most High, sends down preordained trials on men in the form of fear, hunger, loss of lives and wealth, or loss of the fruits of one’s labour.

Thirdly, difficulties result from man’s evil deeds, errors or heedlessness, as the Holy Qur’an explains later:

And whatever misfortune befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought and He pardons much (42:30).

It is clear that the remedy for this kind of affliction, besides sabr (perseverance), is taubah (repentance), istighfar (seeking forgiveness and protection from sin), and self-reformation.

Sometimes it is very difficult to make a distinction between these three kinds of affliction. For this reason, piety and caution demand that whatever the kind of difficulty that may attend, besides sabr, one should resort to taubah and istighfar and self-reformation. If the trial does arise because of one’s own doing, then its coming can serve a higher purpose; that is, one’s improvement and one’s moral and spiritual perfection, just as gold is purified when it passes through the crucible of fire. This is one of the effects of misfortune.
of one’s own doing, then its coming can serve a higher purpose; that is, one’s improvement and one’s moral and spiritual perfection, just as gold is purified when it passes through the crucible of fire. This is one of the effects of misfortune.

An irreligious person considers difficulties as accidental happenings or chance events and so displays impatience and restlessness when smitten. He resorts to alcohol or some other kind of intoxicant as he vainly tries to forget the misfortune. Sometimes, some people even commit suicide. But the Qur’an, full of wisdom, tells us:

*No calamity befalls except through the command or the permission of Allah* (64:11).

For this reason, one must endure troubles with courage, *sabr*, *taubah* and *istighfar*, and one must solicitously look after correcting one’s self, just in case (may Allah forbid) those burdens have come about as a punishment for one’s evil deeds.

To call for help when affliction strikes is inherent in man’s nature, and as every difficulty comes through Allah’s command or His permission, it is entirely in accord with his nature to call upon Him for help. Let us now examine in what manner one should ask for that assistance.

The first category of difficulties which I mentioned above is that which befalls the sent ones of God or the acceptors of truth. So, as those who accept truth are unfortunately always small in number and weak in means, while their opponents exceed them greatly in numbers and power and they are ever on the boil to hurt and even destroy the righteous ones, the necessity, nay, the restless thirst for seeking assistance, is created in the hearts of the acceptors of truth. And who is their helper except Allah? Therefore He instructs us (in the first verse of this lesson) to seek assistance but with patience; that is, to be patient in trials and afflictions would in itself bring the help of Allah, Most High.

Nonetheless, it is in the nature of man to call for help. That is why Allah, Most High, commands us to call on Him through *du'a* (supplication) and *salah* (prayer). If the believers in Truth are urged to bear patience, it is
because by accepting Truth, whatever trials come, they come so that man’s lip profession of faith may be driven into his heart like a nail. Furthermore, faith penetrates the very veins and fibres of man provided that he endures afflictions with fortitude and remains firm in his convictions. And if to such a person Allah gave permission to call upon Him through du’ā and salah, it is because du’ā and salah establish and reinforce the bond between man and Allah, and as the affliction lengthens, he increases in strength and that is the greatest benefit a believer can derive from difficulties. For this reason, truth indeed comes so that the slaves of Allah may meet Him. Furthermore, bowing before Allah brings comfort to the heart of a believer and ultimately feelings of delight and ecstasy come, and that is the highest bounty in this life and the next. Those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah. Now surely in Allah’s remembrance do hearts find rest (13:28).

So, if in spite of man’s fortitude and sincere appeals to Allah the difficulties do not go away, do not think that Allah is not at man’s side or that his supplications have been in vain. For this reason, the words: Certainly Allah is with the patient, are repeated. So make du’ā and persevere patiently, because patience is an outstanding attribute of Allah and both the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith command us to acquire the qualities of Allah, Most High.

What a great honour it is for man to be given the opportunity to colour himself with the colours of Allah, and who can be more patient than Allah? We take Allah’s colour, and who is better than Allah at colouring… (2:138). Today, right in front of His eyes there are so many peoples of the world who deny His existence; not only the peoples in Communist countries, but in Europe and America as well, the cry has been raised and this has spread to all parts of the globe, that God (may Allah forbid!) never existed, and even if He did, then He is now dead. Those who do not display this rudeness and impertinence attribute partners to Allah, Most High, and worship an idol which they have made with their own hands, or they worship an animal, the cow, or they take as God a creation of His – a dead human being (Prophet Jesus). That, too, is tantamount to rudeness and insolence. In addition, the most heinous sins, evils and mischief are committed right in front of God’s eyes and see how He bears all this with patience and determination. If He were not so merciful and forbearing, then the whole
Many of the acceptors of truth have been murdered. Were their lives in vain or their efforts wasted? Certainly not! We are told not to refer to them as dead for they have, in fact, attained that exalted and everlasting life which it is impossible to surpass. They have been delivered from this life and its sorrows, illnesses, hunger and pain and have gone straight into the everlasting garden of bliss. In fact, they are to be envied!

The second class of afflictions are those that are from Allah as a decree or as a trial, by means of different kinds of fear, hunger, poverty or the loss of wealth and lives or the fruits of labour. These difficulties have been decreed as a form of trial. The purpose of a trial, when Allah is the One Who sends it, is to manifest the hidden condition of man; that is, his inner virtues or weaknesses. *And be not weak-hearted, nor grieve...* (3:139). For example, if difficulty befalls a man and in order to extricate himself he tells a lie or accepts a bribe or breaks his promise, etc., then in this way his concealed weaknesses are brought into the open so that he may reform himself before death comes and carries him off, leaving for him no remedy but Hell. On the other hand, if a person bears with stoicism those God-ordained trials, there develop in his character such high morals that were non-existent before. This is a manifestation of hidden beauties. Just as a tree that possesses within it flowers and fruits which can only be seen when it is torn apart, so, too, whatever beautiful flowers and fruits reside in man’s personality are the very ones which will assume the form of lovely flowers and fruits of his garden in the next life.

This is why Allah commands: *And give news to those who bear the slings and arrows of faith with steadfastness.* What good news is, will be disclosed later. But before that, who are the patient ones who, when God-given trials befall, say: “We are the property of Allah. He can do whatever He likes with us”? And if we have lost something or some damage is done then that is only a trifle, for we, ourselves, have to return to Him and if He is pleased with us, He will compensate us over and above in that everlasting home which He will bestow on us. In any case, everything in this life has to be lost when death comes to us. But over and above this, in this very life He says that such people will be granted *maghfirah* (forgiveness) and *rahmah* (mercy).
Maghfirah is Allah’s protection. Protection from what? From the evil consequences of man’s sins, from weaknesses or heedlessness or from punishment for past sins or from committing those same sins in the future because of human weakness. Whenever man commits a sin or exhibits some weakness or carelessness, then the danger of falling into it again is possible. For example, if a person steals once, it becomes easy for him to do it a second time. So, the patient man does not only receive Allah’s protection, but Allah says that His spiritual graces descend on him. Spiritual graces are the real blessings, for worldly bounties come to an end during man’s lifetime or certainly when he dies. But spiritual favours accompany his soul into the next life – the everlasting one – and there they will assume the form of manifest blessings.

Also mentioned is another great blessing for the patient, and that is contained in Surah Al-Fatiha:

*Guide us to the right path.*

This guidance is really finding Allah, Himself. Finding Allah is indeed the purpose of man’s existence or creation and there is no bigger boon that man can get than that of meeting the Most High. Then He says that these favoured ones will be guided along the straight path that will lead them in this very life to Allah, Himself, like the prophets, the truthful and the saints who meet Allah here on earth. But these are the ones who suffer the most afflictions. Those who do not effect a union with Allah here on earth are in any case on the straight path that will lead them to the prized goal. For this reason, my friends, do not be anxious in times of distress, but bear them with fortitude in order that you may meet Allah, Most High.

*Wherever you are, death will overtake you, though you are in towers, raised high. And if good befalls them, they say: This is from thee. Say: All is from Allah. But what is the matter with these people that they make no effort to understand anything? Whatever good befalls thee (O man), it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls thee, it from thyself. And We have sent thee (O Prophet) to mankind as a Messenger. And Allah is sufficient as a witness (4:78-79).*
From Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

The following are some relevant excerpts on the subject of trials and tribulations from the writings of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (taken from Malfuzat, vol. X. pp. 82-89).

Difficulties are bound to come

Worldly-minded people behave in such a manner that in time of difficulty they even deny the existence of Allah, the Great Creator. The world runs in such a way that afflictions are bound to occur. Look at the vast number of people who have passed away from this world, and tell me, who can make a claim that trials did not befall each person? Some suffered as regards their children, some concerning their wealth, whilst as to others, their honour was tarnished. In short, some kind of trial and tribulation must be experienced by people. It is impossible to avoid this in the world. This is a necessity of life. An Arab poet gives us an old couplet:

“I have seen tremendous difficulties in this world. Those who, like me, may live through the year, will surely witness some.”

The troubles of the world are, in fact, for a few days; some will die early and others later, but in the end, all will be taken away by the grace of Allah.

Hardships placed by the Shari‘ah

In the path of religion, there are two kinds of difficulties. One kind is that relating to the Shari‘ah (that which issues from the Law), like Prayer, Fasting, Pilgrimage and Zakah (compulsory charity). For the sake of prayer, man leaves off his business and even undergoes inconveniences in order to go to the mosque. In the cold season he has to get up in the middle of the night and in the month of Ramadhan he endures hunger and thirst throughout the day. In the journey to perform the pilgrimage, he experiences hardships. In zakah, he gives of the fruits of his labour to assist others. These are all Shari‘ah difficulties and are the means by which man obtains blessings and they cause him to advance towards Allah. But in all this, man is given some kind of ease or convenience and he seeks a way of comfort for himself. For example, in the winter season, he warms the water to perform ablution.
Again, if because of illness he cannot perform prayer standing, then he sits and prays. In Ramadhan, at dawn, he gets up and gorges himself with food. In fact, in the month of Ramadhan many people spend more on food than they usually do in other months. In short, in these hardships enjoined by the Shari’ah, man always brings in some relaxation of the rules to a certain extent. For this reason, he does not achieve complete purity and he cannot quickly traverse the various stages of acquiring the pleasure of Allah.

Hardships of fate
In heavenly hardships which descend from above, man has no choice or discretion whatsoever. In any case, he has to show endurance and for this reason these difficulties are a means of his drawing closer to Allah.

Both kinds of trials – worldly, and that of the Shari’ah – are mentioned by Allah in the Qur’an. As regards the Shari’ah injunctions, Allah mentions in the first section of the Holy Qur’an:

I, Allah, am the Best Knower. This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide for those who keep their duty (2:1-2).

That is, true believers are those who have faith in Allah, the Unseen. They keep up prayer, in spite of hundreds of evil whisperings and distractions that attempt to divert them again and again. They would turn to Allah though they may suffer from distraction from Satan. Similarly, in the wealth given to man by Allah, there is a share for the needy. These are obligations enjoined by the Shari’ah but they cannot get the full share of blessings by performing these obligations because man is careless. Many people are unaware of the pith or essence of prayer and only fulfil the formalities.

In order to make spiritual advancement, heavenly hardships are sent upon man and Allah has made mention of them in the Holy Qur’an:

*And We shall certainly try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give good news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them say: Surely we are Allah’s and to Him we shall return. Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord; and those are the follow-
ers of the right course (2:155-157).

Reward corresponding to loss
Allah is not a cruel tyrant. When a person suffers a severe blow and he displays patience and perseverance, he then receives a reward way and above the amount of hardship undergone. Allah is Rahim (Most Merciful), Ghafur (Most Forgiving) and Sattar (Screener of faults). He does not burden a person with afflictions that will drive him away from the Path, but rather, He gives trials that are calculated to make man advance in taqwa. According to the Sufis, in times of hardships and trials a wicked person goes backward, but a righteous one advances even further ahead.

Piety is achieved through afflictions
Man can be said to possess taqwa only when, if difficulties befall him, he leaves every avenue of support and puts Allah first, and shunning a life of ease and comfort, he seeks the bitter life. The reformation of man’s inner condition does not come about by mere customary salah; trials are a necessary ingredient. “The first attack of love is as fierce as the attack of a lion.” Many are the prophets, messengers and truthful ones who have passed away, but not a single one of them ever achieved spiritual progress through everyday routine. Rather, the secret of their elevation lies in the fact that they lived in total conformity with the will of Allah.

Allah is a faithful Friend
Consider well how man, in spite of thousands of weaknesses, is still faithful to his true friends. Do you think that Allah, Who is Rahman (Beneficent) and Rahim (Merciful), will not be sincere to His servants? Love Allah to such an extent that if you have to choose between one thousand children and Allah, you will unhesitatingly choose Allah and care nothing about the children.

Blessings of afflictions
Difficulties beset all the prophets of Allah and no one from among them was exempt. In this way, those who showed endurance in troubled times received
very great blessings and rewards. Allah, Most High, has told the Holy Prophet in the Holy Qur’an to give good news to the patient who, in times of difficulties say:

There was a time when we were nothing that could be mentioned and Allah gave us life. We believe and trust in Him and to Him we shall return.

For such people are good news:

Those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the Garden which you were promised. We are your friends in this world’s life and in the Hereafter, and you have therein what your souls desire and you have therein what you ask for (41:30-31).

Because of these hardships, whatever blessings they obtain and whatever good news they receive from Allah, far exceed what they get through prayer and zakah.

To perform prayer in the manner in which it is to be observed is a noble thing, but if Allah’s mercy becomes focussed on you, that is better then anything else, and through this, you obtain guidance and rectitude.

Address to the Jama’at
Listen attentively now, O members of my Jama’at, and understand clearly that Allah has prescribed these two kinds of difficulties for your own good. Firstly, there are the Shari’ah duties, so observe them steadfastly; and secondly, there are the pre-ordained ones (qaza-o-qadar). Many people succeed in evading in some way or the other the Shari’ah obligations and do not fulfil them in the required manner. But who can escape the decrees of Allah? Remember, man has no choice, no discretion, no power. Remember also that for man this earthly existence is not the only one, but instead there is another world – the life Hereafter. This earthly life, too, is a very short one – fifty or sixty years, sometimes ten or twelve years more – and then you die. The troubles of this world end with death, but that world of the Hereafter has no
end. Since resurrection is inevitable and it is a necessary corollary of our faith, then why should it be difficult to bear trials with fortitude in this earthly existence of a few days? Strive hard, then, for the next life.

Sign of a believer
The sign of a true believer is that not only does he display patience, but more than that, he is happy in times of difficulties. We ought in times of difficulties to put Allah’s pleasure above everything else. The blessings of the favoured ones should take precedence in our minds. There are many people who, when hardship afflicts them, begin to wail and lament and complain as if they were severing all connection with Allah. Some women even begin to curse and many men, too, are found wanting in their faith.

Important advice
This is an important piece of advice and you should remember it well. If anyone is afflicted with a small difficulty, he should fear lest it increases because this life is the home of troubles and to remain complacent and heedless is detrimental to us. Many a trouble comes to us as a warning. In the beginning, it is light and we do not even suspect that it is serious, but it gradually grows until it becomes frightening. For example, if one should gently massage you, your body derives comfort from it, but if the same hand should strike you a heavy blow, then it will cause pain.

Accept the opportunity of service as a blessing
Difficulties provide an opportunity for spiritual elevation. Prophet Abraham (as) did not break down in tears when Allah asked for his son, but instead he thanked Allah for giving him the chance to be of service. The child’s mother was pleased, and so, too, was the son.

It is reported that once the minaret of a mosque collapsed and the Shah of the time made prostration and thanked Allah for giving him the opportunity to share in the blessings received by those great elders who had raised the foundation of the mosque.

In any case, time passes by; even the eaters of meat and pula’o (dish of rice
and flesh) finally die. But he who burns in afflictions and bears them steadfastly will receive his reward in the end. A hundred and twenty four thousand prophets bear testimony that the reward for patience and perseverance is sure.

Ultimately you have to be patient
Those people who do not exhibit patience for the sake of Allah still have to display it in the final analysis, but there is no blessing or reward for that kind of patience. When a dear one dies, women burst into wailing and lamentation and some foolish men put ashes on their head. A little while later, they show patience as their outburst subsides and they forget everything.

It is recorded that a certain woman, on the death of her child, went to the grave and stood up crying loudly. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was passing by and he counselled her to fear God and have patience. This wretched woman rebuked him saying:

"Begone! No trouble like mine has befallen you."

This unfortunate one did not know that the Holy Prophet had displayed the greatest patience through the deaths of eleven children. Afterwards, when she came to know that the giver of the advice was the Holy Prophet, she went to his home and said:

"O Prophet! I am bearing up patiently."

He, however, replied:

"True patience is that which is displayed when the blow first comes."

In short, with the very passing of time, patience gradually comes about, but genuine patience is that which is shown in the very beginning for the sake of Allah, Who has promised countless rewards for the patient. This promise of limitless reward is only for those who patiently endure.

From *The Teachings of Islam*
The following two extracts are taken from *The Teachings of Islam* by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (translated from Urdu by Maulana Muhammad Ali).

1. The sixth means by which a person may safely attain the goal is perseverance. That is, he should be indefatigable in the way in which he walks and unswerving under the hardest trial.

   (As for) those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the Garden which you were promised. We are your friends in this world's life and in the Hereafter (41:30-31).

   In these verses, we are told that perseverance in faith brings about the pleasure of God. It is true, as the Arabic proverb goes, that “perseverance is more than a miracle.”

   The highest degree of perseverance is called forth when adversities encompass a man all around, when he is threatened with loss of life, property and honour in the Divine path, and whatever is consoling or comforting him forsakes him so much so that the Lord tries him even by closing the door of visions and revelations for a time. It is when a man is surrounded by these dreary sights and the last ray of hope disappears that perseverance must be shown. Under such ills and sufferings a man must show firmness, not swerve from the line; hold on through fire and flood, be willing to suffer every disgrace, wait for no succour or support, nor even seek any good tidings from on High, and in spite of his helplessness and the absence of all comfort, he must stand up firmly, submitting himself to the heavenly will without wringing his hands or beating his breast. This is the true perseverance which reveals the glorious face of God. It is this noble quality which the apostles, the righteous and the faithful still exhale. Referring to this, the Lord of the worlds directs the believers to pray to Him in the following words:

   *Guide us on the right path, the path of those (believers) upon whom Thou hast bestowed (Thy) favours* (1:6-7).

   And:
Our Lord, pour out on us patience and cause us to die in submission (to Thee) (7:128).

It should be noted that in afflictions and trials, the Merciful causes a light to descend upon the hearts of His faithful servants, strengthened with which they meet all trials with calmness and dignity and, on account of the sweetness of their faith, kiss the chains with which they are bound for walking in the right path. When the righteous servants are under hard trials and sufferings and see death face to face, they do not supplicate their Creator to remove their sufferings. They know that to pray to Him to remove the cup of their hard lot is opposing His will and not in accordance with total resignation to it. The true lover does not recede but takes a forward step when he sees ills and adversities and, looking upon his own life as a very insignificant thing, willingly submits himself to the will of heaven and is prepared to meet the worst. Of such people, the Lord says:

And of men is he who sells himself to seek the pleasure of Allah. And Allah is (indeed) Compassionate to the servants (2:207).

In short, this is the essence of the constancy which leads to the Divine Being (pp. 156-159).

1. The other source of knowledge is that which is perfect in the highest degree and makes a man realise the certainty of the existence of God. This consists of the adversities and hardships which the prophets and the righteous are made to suffer at the hands of their enemies or by a heavenly decree. Sufferings make a man realise the full force of the legal injunctions which are thus illustrated in his practical life. Religious dogmas are mere theories and their perfection can be tested only through practice. A person who undergoes sufferings has an occasion to apply the treasure of knowledge accumulated in his heart to the actual circumstances of life, and by their right application he becomes, as it were, a perfect embodiment of Divine guidance. The moral qualities, of whose knowledge the brain and the heart are the sole repositories at first, are displayed through actual practice in the external and internal faculties; and forgiveness, revenge, patience, mercy, etc. are not mere names to such a person, but becomes realities which he has felt and
seen, which thus make an impression upon his external and internal nature. On this point, the Supreme Being says:

*And we shall certainly try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give good news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them say: Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall return. Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord; and those are the followers of the right course (2:155-157).*

Here we are told that there is no great excellence in mere knowledge that is treasured in the heart or the brain, but that the knowledge to be valued is that which, on account of its application to the practical course of life, gives colouring to a man’s life. To improve and strengthen one’s knowledge, the best means is its application in practice so that its impression is left not only upon the mind but also upon every faculty and limb. In fact, every sort of knowledge, however low its comparative value, is defective so long as it is untested by practice. It is to this that the Lord calls our attention in the above verses. We are told that our morals are not finally developed unless they are proved by sufferings and trials which stand to them in the relation of practice to knowledge:

*You will certainly be tried in your property and your persons. And you will hear from those who have been given the Book before you and from the idolaters much abuse. And if you are patient and keep your duty, surely this is an affair of great resolution (3:135).*

These verses show conclusively that knowledge is not perfect and fruitful without practical application. Knowledge which is at its best in practice is a source of blessing, but that which never passes into the domain of the practical has no value. (pp. 216-217.)

**WORDS OF CONSOLOATION**

1. Allah, Most High, is with those who show patience and perseverance. *O you who believe, seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allah is with the patient (2:153).*
2. In the opening chapter of the Holy Qur’an (Al Fatihah) we pray for guidance, that is, Guide us on the right path, and Allah promises us that if we are patient and rely on Him, He will make us of the rightly guided ones (muhtadun). Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord; and those are the followers of the right course (2:157). Guidance here means union with Allah.

3. A source of great strength is the knowledge that Allah does not place more burdens on us than we can bear. Allah imposes not on any soul a duty beyond its scope. For it, is that which it earns (of good), and against it that which it works (of evil). Our Lord, punish us not if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord, do not lay on us a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us. Our Lord, impose not on us (afflictions) which we have not the strength to bear. And pardon us! And grant us protection! And have mercy on us! Thou art our Patron, so grant us victory over the disbelieving people (2:286). He also gives us the kinds of difficulties that He knows we can handle, and for which He has prepared us.

4. We can rest assured that Allah knows our condition. He knows indeed your condition (24:64); And He is with you wherever you are (57:4).

5. Allah invites us to call upon Him: Pray to Me, I will answer you (40:60); I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me (2:186), for He is nearer to us than our life vein: We are nearer to him than his life-vein (50:15).

6. We should never despair of His mercy, for if we have taqwa (piety), help and blessings will come to us from unexpected sources: And whoever keeps his duty to Allah, He ordains a way out for him…. And whoever trusts in Allah, He is sufficient for Him…. And whoever keeps his duty to Allah, He makes his affair easy for him…. Allah lays not on any soul a burden beyond that which He has given it. Allah brings about easy after difficulty (65:2,3,4,5,7). Even in the depths of our despair we shall experience periods of ease and relief: Surely with difficulty is ease. With difficulty is surely ease (94:5-6).
keeps his duty to Allah, He makes his affair easy for him.... Allah lays not on any soul a burden beyond that which He has given it. Allah brings about easy after difficulty (65:2,3,4,5,7).

Even in the depths of our despair we shall experience periods of ease and relief: Surely with difficulty is ease. With difficulty is surely ease (94:5-6).

7. We are given the assurance that if we are truly sincere to Allah, He will remove our evils from us and elevate us from the state of utter distress and despondency (mudtarr) to that of vicegerents of His (khalifas): Or who answers the distressed one (mudtarr) when he calls upon Him and removes the evil, and will make you successors (khalifas) in the earth (27:62). In fact, such will be our status that our lives will constitute a living proof of the existence of Allah (hujjat-ul lah).

8. Everyone in the world has to experience periodically some disappointment, grief, pain, anguish and various other kinds of calamities, but the true believer is purged of his weaknesses, achieves high moral and spiritual rank and comes closer to Allah as a result of his ordeals. Remember that iron has to pass through fire before it becomes steel: And be not weak-hearted, nor grieve, and you will have the upper hand if you are believers. If a wound has afflicted you, a wound like it has also afflicted the (disbelieving) people. And We bring these days to men by turns, that Allah may know those who believe and take witnesses from among you (3:139-140).

9. In times of great tribulation, we are given the opportunity to colour ourselves with some of the colours of Allah: (We take) Allah’s colour, and who is better than Allah at colouring (2:138). For example, Allah is As-Sabur (The One Who is most patient and forbearing), so if we show patience (sabr) we, too, can become like Him according to our capacity.

10. When we suffer a heavy blow, we gain deep insight into our inner qualities. We discover our weaknesses and our strengths and even more, we have the opportunity to develop high morals that we did not possess before. As the poet, Ghalib, exhorts us: “Think of what the drop of water has to undergo before it becomes a pearl.”
11. If we bear our calamities in the right manner, our faith will penetrate every nerve and tissue of ours and move to our limbs from our heart just as blood flows from the heart to every part of our body. We must remember that mere theoretical knowledge of swimming does not make us great swimmers. To be of use, our knowledge must be put into practice.

12. Another source of encouragement is the realisation that others have suffered more than we have and they have survived and even excelled in life. The greatest exemplar of this is the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) who lost eleven children and never complained to Allah nor questioned Him.

13. Our hearts must be purified before Allah’s reflection falls on it. Trials as well as sincere prayers and surrender to Allah, Most High, serve this purpose. We must also be loyal to Him as a dog is to its master, not harbouring any grievance, resentment or complaint against Him. We should appreciate, even in our agony, that we are being given the chance to prove our faith in and our loyalty to our Lord for Allah, Most High, wants to see whether we give precedence to faith over the material advantages of the world that come in many forms.

14. Trials and tribulations are calculated to bring about the death of our ego and a new life is infused in us when we begin to see the fruits and elevated stages of faith and as we witness their effects on our own lives.

15. Through trials and tribulations we are given the opportunity to achieve higher and higher spiritual rank, and as we proceed further in our elevation, higher ranks of angels inspire our hearts. Every calamity is an opportunity for our hearts to become soft for the remembrance of Allah, Most High.

16. Through trials and calamities in life we are blessed with the opportunity to complete our faith and work for spiritual perfection for nothing is gained even in worldly life without having to face and overcome overwhelming odds. The beauty of faith in Allah, Most High, is that after a
long struggle, His grace comes to our assistance and carries us the rest of the way.

17. We cannot win the pleasure of Allah, Most High, unless we endure hardships in the manner of the prophets of old.

18. When the human soul is faced with painful ordeals and disasters, the experience and the consequent humility and acceptance of Allah's decrees make it radiant just as iron and glass, although possessing the capacity to shine, must be burnished before they could be resplendent.

19. Allah, Most High, is not cruel. It is true that even the righteous experience pain and suffering, and unbelievers consider these occurrences as punishment. However, the opposite is the case, for tribulations are indeed a blessing which is disguised in sorrow which enables the righteous to attain a closer relationship with Allah, Most High. In fact, a paradise is hidden in every trial that Allah gives us and we can enjoy that paradise only if we bear it as Allah, Most High, directs us, that is, "Seek assistance through patience, perseverance and prayer and say: To Allah we belong and to Him is our return." In other words, trials and tribulations are a most wonderful gift that is enwrapped in sorrow. This is never ending opportunity, for human beings are always engulfed in some difficulty or the other.

20. Just as an earthquake brings up the treasures that are hidden beneath the earth, so, too, trials and tribulations can unearth the gems that lie dormant in the human heart.

21. Finally, when all is said and done, we must never forget that Allah is peace, and that peace comes from Him and peace is returned to Him and only in Him do hearts find tranquillity: Those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah, now surely in Allah's remembrance do hearts find rest (13:28). Or, as Jigar Moradabadi puts it:
Let everyone in the world know,
That there are millions of tribulations, but only one nest.

CONCLUSION

It is our fervent wish that we display the requisite sabr (fortitude) for each circumstance in life, as the Holy Qur’an commands us in 3:198:

_O you who believe, show (normal) patience and (extraordinary) steadfastness and guard the frontiers (of your heart from despondency, depression, etc.) and keep your duty to Allah (love Him and take Him as your shield) so that you may be successful (that you may develop to the fullest the hidden faculties of your body and soul)._  

We must always bear in mind that it is our duty to encourage and support others also, especially in their hour of trial, as the Holy Qur’an exhorts us:

... _exhort one another to Truth and exhort one another to sabr (patience) (103:3)._  

In addition, we must seize the opportunity during our dark hours to develop high moral qualities like determination, tolerance, sympathy, empathy and to be lenient and understanding not only to our own selves, but to others also, as these two sayings of the Holy Prophet (sas) and an anonymous poet advise us:

“Allah is kind only to those who show kindness to those on earth.”

“If you are compassionate to those on earth, Heaven will be kind to you.”
Poem:

If you have learned to walk
A little more sure-footedly than I,
Be patient with my stumbling then
And know that only as I do my best and try
May I attain the goal
For which we both are striving.
If through experience your soul
Has gained heights which I
As yet in dim-lit vision see,
Hold out your hand and point the way,
Lest from its straightness I should stray,
And walk a mile with me.

Let us constantly bear in mind that Allah is Ash-Shakur (the Recogniser, the Appreciator, the One Who gives large rewards even for the smallest of works and multiplies them beyond measure; that He knows our condition (24:64) and that He does not waste the reward of a worker from among us, whether male or female (3:194).

Therefore, let us all heed the creed of this unknown poet:

A good creed
If any little word of ours
Can make one life the brighter;
If any little song of ours
Can make one heart the lighter;
God help us speak that little word,
And take our bit of singing
And drop it in some lonely vale
To set the echoes ringing.
If any little love of ours
Can make one life the sweeter;
If any little care of ours
Can make one step the fleeter;
If any little help may ease
The burden of another;
God give us love and care and strength
To help along each other.
If any little thought of ours
Can make life the stronger;
If any cheery smile of ours
Can make its brightness longer;
Then let us speak that thought today,
With tender eyes aglowing,
So God may grant some weary one
Shall reap from our glad sowing.

And be patient and thy patience is not but by (the help of)
Allah.... Surely Allah is with those who keep their duty and
those who do good (to others) (16:127-128).

To Him do ascend the goodly words, and the goodly deed - He
exalts it... (35:10).

May Allah bless us all and may we never despair of His mercy. Instead,
may we use whatever calamities He ordains for us to develop moral and
spiritual beauty and be of benefit to others also.

Ameen.