

THE FLUCTUATION OF HUMANS IN THE QUR'AN BETWEEN DISBELIEF AND FAITH

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Abstract: This research addresses the topic of the fluctuation of humans between disbelief and faith in light of the Qur'an. It highlights the nature of the human self as presented by the Qur'an, including its tendencies to fluctuate between disbelief and faith, and the influence of internal and external factors on it. The Qur'anic verses related to this topic were analyzed, with a focus on the reasons that lead to fluctuation between righteousness and deviation, such as the influence of desires, Satan, and the social environment. The research also reviewed the Qur'anic approach to addressing this phenomenon through repentance, seeking forgiveness, and returning to Allah. The study concluded the importance of faith, piety, and a good environment in stabilizing a person on the path of obedience. It recommended conducting more comprehensive analytical studies on the psychological and social factors related to fluctuation, and deriving practical solutions from the Qur'an to enhance stability in obedience.

Keywords: Obedience, Disobedience, Qur'an, Human Self, Repentance

INTRODUCTION:

Praise be to Allah, the Turner of hearts and eyes, and the Alternator of day and night, who has placed the hearts of His servants between two of His fingers, turning them as He wills. Peace and blessings be upon the leader of the monotheists, the grateful in times of blessing and the patient in times of trial, and upon his family and companions.

To proceed: The fluctuation of humans between faith and disbelief, obedience and disobedience, is one of the evidences and proofs of Allah's Oneness and His exclusivity in His Lordship, Divinity, Names, and Attributes. He is the One described with qualities of majesty and perfection.

The entire universe is subject to His will and dominion, and human beings are but a small part of this vast universe. They cannot escape His dominion and will. Indeed, every atom in this universe moves only by His permission and knowledge:

{وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظِلْمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَابِسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ} [الأنعام: 59]

If even a grain does not move without His will and knowledge, how then about the state of humans in their obedience and disobedience, faith and disbelief? How could any of their actions and fluctuations occur without His knowledge and will? Glorified is He, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

For many years, I have contemplated and pondered these noble verses in the Book of Allah, which discuss the fluctuation of humans between disbelief and faith. I have sought to uncover their secrets and understand the reasons behind these fluctuations, both positively and negatively, in strength and weakness.

I have encountered several blessed verses that analyze the human condition in states of faith and disbelief, obedience and disobedience. These verses precisely and eloquently depict the human state, surpassing contemporary psychologists, many of whom struggled to comprehend the essence of the human self and the reasons for its fluctuations. They were divided into numerous schools and methodologies in analyzing the nature of the human self, with no consensus among them. Their statements conflicted, and their opinions varied because their approach to studying the human self was often based on philosophical foundations and personal perspectives, not guided by revelation or illuminated by its light: {أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لَجِيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ بَدَهُ لَمْ يَكِدْ يَرَاهَا وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ} [النور: 40]

I have not found any work dedicated to this topic with the aforementioned perspective. Hence, I was motivated to delve into understanding the human self, recognizing my dire need to comprehend its nature and manage and treat it effectively. What a challenging and intricate self it is! Moreover, I aim to benefit my fellow believers with the findings of this research. May Allah, the All-Knowing Opener, grant us insight into the truth and guide us to the straight path regarding this complex topic. He is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.

The Importance of the Topic:

1. Understanding the Nature of the Human Self:

This research addresses a fundamental topic that reflects the complexity of the human self and seeks to understand the reasons behind its fluctuation between faith and disbelief. Understanding this nature helps individuals improve their behavior and strengthen their relationship with Allah.

2. Highlighting the Qur'an's Precedence Over Modern Psychology: The study reveals how the Qur'an precisely addresses the human condition in its psychological and spiritual fluctuations in a manner unmatched by psychologists and philosophers. This strengthens the belief that the Qur'an is the ultimate source of knowledge.

3. Contributing to Educational and Reformative Approaches:

The research provides educational insights that can be employed to address and guide the human self towards righteousness. Understanding these fluctuations assists in devising effective methods for self-purification.

4. Addressing Social and Behavioral Phenomena:

The study helps explain phenomena such as weak faith, relapse after obedience, and returning to sins after repentance, offering practical solutions for individuals and societies.

Research Problem:

How can the fluctuation of humans between faith and disbelief be understood in light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, shedding light on the causes, implications, and effects of these fluctuations?

Research Questions:

1. What is the nature of the human self that makes it inclined to fluctuate between disbelief and faith?
2. How does human fluctuation between ease and hardship affect their relationship with Allah?
3. How does human fluctuation manifest in forgetfulness during ease and remembrance during hardship?
4. Why does a person attribute good to themselves and deflect blame for evil?
5. How do Islamic texts address this behavior of attributing good and deflecting evil?
6. What drives a person to deny their innate pure nature?
7. How do crises and trials influence a person's return to their innate disposition?
8. What is the divine wisdom behind human fluctuation between disbelief and faith, ease and hardship?
9. How does this fluctuation contribute to fulfilling servitude to Allah and increasing faith?

Research Objectives:

1. To explain the nature of the human self and its inclination to fluctuate between disbelief and faith as portrayed in the Qur'an and Sunnah.
2. To clarify the impact of human fluctuation between ease and hardship on their relationship with Allah and their behavior.
3. To interpret the reasons behind a person's forgetfulness of their Lord during ease and their remembrance of Him during hardship, correlating it with Islamic texts.
4. To analyze the tendency of a person to attribute good to themselves and deflect evil, and to show how this behavior is addressed in the Qur'an and Sunnah.
5. To understand the causes that lead a person to deny their innate pure nature and examine the factors prompting their return to it.
6. Highlighting the divine wisdom behind human fluctuation between disbelief and faith, ease and hardship, and linking it to achieving servitude to Allah.
7. To illustrate how human fluctuation contributes to self-purification, increased faith, and fulfilling the purpose of creation.

Previous Studies:

1. **"The Self and Its Levels in the Qur'an – An Analytical Study"** by Dr. Abdullah Noor Abbad, *Rehan Journal of Scientific Publishing*.
2. This book discusses the Qur'an's examination of the human self, exploring its various dimensions and revealing its reality to mankind. Numerous verses address the ascent and descent of the self, its motives, tendencies, temptations, inspirations, levels, and states.
3. **"Man in the Qur'an: Between Metaphysical Essence and Ethical Person"** by Shafiq Akreker.

This study focuses on the metaphysical and moral aspects of human nature as depicted in the Qur'an. Our study, however, differs in its subject matter, as it specifically addresses fluctuation and how the Qur'an addresses it.

Preface:

No book has analyzed the nature of the human self and unveiled its secrets and intricacies like the Qur'an. Those who contemplate its verses find themselves amazed by the precise and insightful descriptions and diagnoses of the human self. This is neither surprising nor astonishing, for it is the word of the Lord of the worlds, the Creator of this human self, who brought it into existence from nothingness. Glorified and exalted is He above what they associate with Him.

The verses that analyze the nature of the human self are numerous. However, I will focus exclusively on the topic of this research, which is the fluctuation of the human self between disbelief and faith, as influenced by conditions of ease and hardship, and in response to trials. The Qur'an has extensively addressed this fluctuation through various themes, which can be summarized as follows:

Firstly: The nature of human beings and their tendency to fluctuate:

Allah, Glorified and Exalted, has mentioned in His Book the fluctuations of humans, whether as individuals or groups. In Surah Yunus, both cases are mentioned. In depicting the state of the individual, Allah says: { وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنْبِهِ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَائِمًا فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهُ مَرَّ كَأَن لَّمْ يَدْعُنَا إِلَى ضُرِّ مَسَّهُ كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ } [Yunus: 12]. This verse illustrates the nature of humans and their fluctuations between hardship and ease. It reveals their weakness and need when adversity touches them, prompting them to turn to Allah with a humble heart. They find no solace except in invoking Him in all states—lying down, sitting, or standing—persistently supplicating as if there were no other helper. However, once Allah grants relief and removes their affliction, they revert to heedlessness, forgetting their prior supplication, proceeding as if they had never called upon Allah.

Ibn Kathir, may Allah have mercy on him, explains this meaning, saying: "Allah informs us about humans, their impatience, and anxiety when harmed. As in His saying: {And when adversity touches him, he is full of extensive supplication} [Fussilat: 51], meaning frequent supplication; they are in the same vein. When a hardship befalls them, they are anxious and desperate, increasing their supplications for its removal. They call upon Allah for relief from their distress in all conditions—lying down, sitting, and standing. But when Allah removes the hardship and relieves their distress, they turn away arrogantly as if nothing had afflicted them, {passing as if they had never invoked Us for a hardship that touched them}." ⁽¹⁾

In depicting the fluctuation of groups in the same Surah, Allah says: { وَإِذَا أَتَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَرَاءٍ مَسَّيْنَاهُمْ } إِذَا لَهُمْ مَكْرٌ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَلِلَّهِ أَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا إِنَّ رُسُلَنَا يَكْتُوبُونَ مَا تَمْكُرُونَ (21) هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ حَتَّى إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَرِينَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ يَأْتُوا بِالْحَافِظَةِ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَأَقْبَضَ رِجْلَهُمْ يَرْجِعُ عَائِظٌ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ لَئِنْ أَجَبْنَاهُمْ مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنُكَوِّنَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ (22) فَلَمَّا أَتَاهُمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا يَعْبُرُكُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ } [Yunus: 21–23].

These noble verses clarify a profound truth about the nature of some humans when they experience mercy after hardship. They portray the nature of these individuals who remember Allah only in moments of distress and return to their innate disposition, removing what veiled it, only during times of tribulation. But once they feel secure, they either forget or become arrogant, except for those who are guided, whose innate disposition remains sound, alive, and responsive at all times, constantly purified by the light of faith.

The profound wisdom of Allah manifests in these verses, revealing the fluctuation in human nature, even collectively. When trials and severe afflictions surround them, they turn to Allah with sincere supplication, pledging to be among the grateful if He saves them from their plight. However, as soon as Allah removes their distress, they immerse themselves in heedlessness once again.

This phenomenon recurs in human life; it is not an exceptional case but rather a characteristic inherent to those who turn away from God. They replace constant gratitude with distance and ingratitude. Thus, when a person neglects the call of faith and deviates from the innate sincerity instilled during times of hardship, they wrong themselves and bring about their own downfall. They gain nothing from their transgression except fleeting worldly pleasure and temporary prosperity, while leaving behind their deeds and true essence.

In this context, Al-Sa'di (may Allah have mercy on him) explains, after illustrating how people become rebellious when God saves them and then forget their previous distress:

"But this transgression ultimately harms them. Hence, He said: {O mankind, your transgression is only against yourselves—the enjoyment of worldly life} (i.e., the utmost they can hope to achieve through their transgression and failure to sincerely devote themselves to God is to gain a small share of worldly wealth and status, which will quickly vanish and pass away entirely, after which they will be forced to leave it behind).

(1)Tafsir Ibn Kathir (4/252).

{Then to Us is your return} on the Day of Resurrection, {and We will inform you about what you used to do}. This serves as a severe warning against persisting in their actions."⁽¹⁾

Both individuals and communities are susceptible to this instability, inclined toward it—except for those whom God has protected and who entrust their inner and outer selves and all their affairs to Him alone.

Among the verses that illustrate human fickleness is His saying:

وَلَيْنَ أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَاهَا مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ لَيَكْفُرُ (9) وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَاهُ نِعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرْأٍ مَسْتَهْزِئٍ لَيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ (10) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ {هود: 11-9}

These noble verses describe human nature in its fluctuation between blessing and hardship. They clarify how people, by nature, experience varying states of despair and joy depending on their circumstances. When God bestows mercy upon them and then withdraws it, they become utterly despondent and deeply distressed, forgetting His past favors and mercy. Conversely, when He afflicts them with hardship and then grants them ease, they become exultant and arrogant, believing that all misfortunes have vanished permanently. They boast about themselves and forget God's grace upon them.

In this regard, Al-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) states:

"Abu Ja'far said: Allah, the Most High, says that if We grant a human being ease, abundance in provision, and a comfortable life—this being the 'mercy' mentioned in this context—{then We withdraw it from him}, meaning, We strip him of it, and he is afflicted with calamities that utterly consume him. {Indeed, he is despairing and ungrateful}, meaning he remains hopeless of Allah's mercy and despairing of any good.

...Abu Ja'far also said: If We expand a person's worldly possessions and grant him prosperity and ease—this being the 'blessings' mentioned in {And if We let him taste favor after hardship has touched him}—then {he will surely say, 'The bad times have left me'}, meaning, he assumes that hardship and difficulty have permanently vanished. {Indeed, he is exultant and boastful}, meaning he rejoices excessively over the blessings he has received.

{Boastful}, meaning he takes pride in the abundance he has been granted, forgetting the trials of life, ignoring its tribulations, and neglecting to seek the lasting bliss and perpetual joy that never fades."⁽²⁾

The non-believing person, when relieved from hardship and granted well-being, attributes this solely to their own merit and worthiness. As Al-Sam'ani states:

"Allah's saying: {And if We let him taste favor after hardship has touched him, he will surely say, 'The bad times have left me'} means that the person assumes that hardships have left him due to his own worthiness, without recognizing that it is from Allah Almighty."⁽³⁾

Al-Sa'di (may Allah have mercy on him) explains that this is human nature, stating: *"Allah informs us about human nature: when Allah grants him mercy, such as health, wealth, children, and similar blessings, and then takes them away, he succumbs to despair and submits to hopelessness. He does not expect reward from Allah, nor does he consider that Allah may restore the blessings or grant him something equal or better.*

And when Allah grants him mercy after hardship, he becomes exultant and arrogant, assuming that his prosperity will never cease. He says: {The bad times have left me. Indeed, he is exultant and boastful}—meaning, he excessively rejoices over what aligns with his desires and takes pride in the blessings of Allah over His servants. This leads him to extravagance, arrogance, self-admiration, and looking down on others. Could there be any flaw worse than this?!

This is human nature in general, except for those whom Allah has guided and removed from this reprehensible disposition to its opposite. These are the ones who remain patient during hardship, never despairing, and who remain grateful in times of ease, never becoming arrogant. They perform righteous deeds—both obligatory and recommended."⁽⁴⁾

Thus, this is an inherent human trait that can only be overcome through faith. For this reason, Allah distinguishes true believers from this general description. Unlike the fickle individual, a true believer remains steadfast in all circumstances—patient during hardships and grateful during blessings, as emphasized in the prophetic hadith to be mentioned later.

Al-Tabari states:

"Then Allah, the Almighty, exempted from this general human description {those who are patient and do righteous deeds}. They were rightfully excluded because 'human' here refers to the human species as a

(1) Tafsir As-Sa'di (p. 361).

(2) Tafsir At-Tabari (15/255-257).

(3) Tafsir As-Sam'ani (2/416).

(4) Tafsir As-Sa'di (p. 378).

whole, similar to His saying: {By time, indeed mankind is in loss, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds} [Al-'Asr: 1-3].

Allah, the Most High, then says: {Except for those who are patient and do righteous deeds}—that is, if they face hardship and difficulty in this world, it does not turn them away from obeying Allah. Instead, they remain patient with His decree. And if they attain ease and prosperity, they express gratitude and fulfill their obligations regarding the blessings bestowed upon them.

Allah says: {For them is forgiveness}—He forgives them and does not disgrace them on the Day of Resurrection—{and a great reward}—meaning, in addition to forgiving their sins, He grants them abundant and immense rewards for their righteous deeds."⁽¹⁾

These verses present us with a great lesson about the necessity of facing life's fluctuations with patience and gratitude. A person may be quickly affected by his circumstances, but faith in God and righteous deeds are the means to overcome these fluctuations, so that the believer lives in balance in both prosperity and adversity, steadfast in obedience to God.

And in Surat al-Isra, God says: [الإسراء: 83] {وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَى بِجَانِبِهِ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَئُوسًا}

Al-Sa'di رحمه الله said: "This is the nature of man as he is, except for those whom God guides. For a person—when God bestows blessings upon him—he rejoices in them and becomes proud of them, and he turns away and distances himself from his Lord, neither thanking Him nor remembering Him.

{وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ} like illness and similar afflictions, {كَانَ يَئُوسًا} indicates that the good has completely cut off his hope from his Lord, and he assumes that his state will last forever.

As for those whom God guides, then—when blessed—they submit to their Lord and thank Him for His blessings; and in adversity, they supplicate, hoping that God will grant them recovery and remove what afflicts them, thereby alleviating the hardship".⁽²⁾

And among the verses that clarify the reasons for a person's fluctuations and his shifting from one state to another is His statement: {وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَعْْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انْقَلَبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ} [الحج: 11]

Ibn Kathir said: "And Al-Bukhari said: حدثنا إبراهيم بن أبي بكر، حدثنا إسرائيل عن أبي حصين: عن سعيد بن جبير عن ابن عباس: Among the people there are those who worship God only superficially. He said: The man would advance (in his religious matters) when his wife bore a boy and his horse produced offspring; he said: This is a sound religion. But if his wife did not bear a boy and his horse did not produce offspring, he said: This is a poor religion.

Then he said: (أي: ذلك هو الخسران المبين) these are the great loss and the disastrous deal, and His saying: [He] calls upon besides God that which neither harms nor benefits him—that is, the idols and rivals he seeks help from, from which he seeks succor and provision, yet which neither benefit him nor harm him. That is the far-reaching deviation".⁽³⁾

And among the verses indicating this fluctuation and revealing the nature of the human soul in dealing with joy and misfortune is His statement: {فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا إِنَّ عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ وَإِنَّا إِذَا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ أَذَقْنَا رَحْمَةً فَرَحَ بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ كَفُورٌ} [الشورى: 48]

Indeed! Thus, the ungrateful person denies the blessings of God upon him and forgets them, while he counts his misfortunes and despairs of God's mercy. The noble verse reveals one aspect of human nature and its weakness in dealing with blessings and calamities, as it highlights the state of a person when he receives mercy from God—he rejoices in it, a joy sometimes accompanied by heedlessness in thanking God, forgetting that this blessing is from God's favor. However, if misfortune or trial befalls him, he attributes it to fate, forgetting that this calamity is often due to the sins and disobedience committed by his own hands; thus he is found in a state of ingratitude toward God's blessings instead of turning to God in repentance and seeking forgiveness.

Al-Tabari explains this meaning, stating: "The interpretation of His statement: {فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا إِنَّ عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ وَإِنَّا إِذَا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ رَحْمَةً فَرَحَ بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ كَفُورٌ} (48) is as follows: God, the Most High, says: If these polytheists turn away, O Muhammad, from what We have brought you of truth and from the guidance We have invited them to, and they do not respond to you and refuse to accept it from you, then leave them, for We will not send you as a guardian over them to record and tally their deeds. {إِنَّ عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ} means: All that is upon you, O Muhammad, is to deliver to them the message with which We have sent you; once you deliver it, you have fulfilled your obligation. God then says: {فَإِنَّا إِذَا أَغْنَيْنَا ابْنَ آدَمَ فَأَعْطَيْنَاهُ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا سَعَةً}, meaning that if We enrich the son of Adam, We grant

(1) Tafsir At-Tabari (15/257).

(2) Tafsir As-Sa'di – Taysir Al-Karim Ar-Rahman (p. 465).

(3) Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azim (5/352).

him abundance from Our bounty—this is the mercy that He, exalted be His praise, mentioned, in that he rejoices: that is, he is glad of the wealth We have given him and the abundance and multitude of riches. {وإن تصيبهم سببة} means: and if misfortune befalls them—namely, scarcity, poverty, and hardship in livelihood. {بما قدمت أيديهم} means: by that which their hands had previously committed in disobedience to God, as a retribution for their disobedience, thereby denying God's blessing and losing hope of goodness. {فإن الإنسان كفور} means: God declares that man is ungrateful for his Lord's blessings, counting his misfortunes while denying the blessings. Moreover, in {وإن تصيبهم سببة} the pronoun is derived as a collective form for males, while man had been mentioned earlier in the singular sense, because it also denotes the collective".⁽¹⁾

We find that the Noble Qur'an presents both cases: in the previous verse it showed how a person, when granted a blessing after hardship, assumes it is due to his own merit and forgets that it is from God; while in this verse God makes it clear that when misfortune befalls him, he does not attribute it to himself—he credits the good to himself and disassociates from the evil!

Al-Tahir ibn Ashur said: "This is a narrative of creation for all people, rooted in human nature, although its manifestations differ according to the individuals' adherence to religious manners. In both cases, man, as a member of the children of Adam, exhibits joy in an absolute sense that is characterized by skepticism to the point of arrogance, while the misfortune caused by their own hands is borne to such degrees of evil that it reaches the level of polytheism, and the description 'كفور' encompasses what is derived from disbelief in the oneness of God and ingratitude for God's blessing.

For this reason, the exegetes differed in their interpretation of the verse. Some attributed it specifically to the disbelieving person, such as al-Zamakhshari, al-Qurtubi, and al-Tayibi, while others applied it to various types of people, such as al-Tabari, al-Baghawi, al-Nasafi, and Ibn Kathir. Some interpreted it as referring to the intended meaning being primary and the secondary one subordinate—a method followed by al-Baydawi and the author of al-Kashf—while others reversed it, as in al-Kawashi's summarization." In both respects, the term "man" in the first and second cases carries the same meaning, referring to the human species as a whole; that is, if We cause people to taste Our blessings—and indeed people are ungrateful—this is understood in a general sense referring to the majority of humanity at that time and place, for most people then were polytheists. This is appropriate in light of His saying: "فإن الإنسان كفور" meaning extremely disbelieving, and His saying: {بما قدمت أيديهم} (referring to disbelief. The shift from the term "people" to "man" is meant to indicate that this characteristic inherent in that creation is only removed by adopting the ethics of Islam; those who have not embraced Islam remain attached to it. This was inserted as an allegory, for the term "man" denotes a species whose attributes vary due to the predominance of desire. This is reiterated in the Qur'an repeatedly, as in His saying: {إن الإنسان خلق هلوعا} (المعارج: 19), and His saying: {إن الإنسان لربه لكوند} (العاديات: 6), and His saying: {وكان الإنسان أكثر شيء جدلا} (الكهف: 54). The use of an emphatic particle to affirm the report is due to the allegorical nature of the revelation, as it was sent down to one who does not doubt the occurrence of this event, resembling the hesitant in emphasizing their rejection of the call to goodness, with the emphatic particle accompanying the elided term.

And "al-idhaqa" is metaphorical in its reference to affliction.

And by "mercy" is meant the effect of mercy, that is, the blessing. In other words, "and indeed if We have mercy upon man, We afflict him with a blessing," as a counterpart to mercy with misfortune, as was met with adversity in His saying: {ولئن أنقذه رحمة منا من بعد ضراء مسته} (in Surat Fussilat [50]).

And by "joy" is meant the kind of joy that goes beyond mere gladness to the point of arrogance and conceit, as used in many verses such as His saying: {إذ قال له قومه لا تفرح إن الله لا يحب الفرحين} (القصص: 76)—not the joy described in His saying: {فرحين بما آتاهم الله من فضله} (آل عمران: 170).

And the unification of the pronoun in "joy" is to accommodate the term "man" even though its meaning is plural, as in His saying: {فقاتلوا التي تبغي} (الحجرات: 9) meaning the group that desires; for the term "group" is used without its explicit meaning, even though previously He said {اقتتلوا} (الحجرات: 9). Therefore, it was followed by "and if misfortune befalls them by that which their hands have advanced" with the collective pronoun, and then it returns, saying: {فإن الإنسان كفور}.

And "if" is used here because the nature of "if" indicates the realization of its condition in abundance, whereas "in" indicates the rarity of its occurrence. Therefore, "if" was used in His saying: "and if misfortune befalls them by that which their hands have advanced," because the occurrence of misfortune is rare compared to the occurrence of blessing, as stated in His saying: {فإذا جاءتهم الحسنة قالوا لنا هذه وإن تصيبهم} (الأعراف: 131) {سببة يطيروا بموسى ومن معه}.

(1) Tafsir At-Tabari (21/556).

And the meaning of His saying: (وإن تصبهم سيئة بما قدمت أيديهم) is an extension of its expression in the earlier saying: (الشورى: 30) [وما أصابكم من مصيبة فيما كسبت أيديكم].

The ruling implied in the sentence "فإن الإنسان كفور" is that it refers to the entire conditional clause. Therefore, the emphatic particle was repeated after the clause containing the condition to encompass both sentences with emphasis. This indicates that among the traits of human nature, there is an inherent tendency toward disbelief in God, because by nature man seeks avenues for benefit and to block channels of harm—conditions that sometimes exceed his capacity. By his nature he may consider precautionary means as sufficient evidence of sound reasoning; however, his imagination is also prone to envisioning forces that enable those causes. When his imagination dictates the existence of powers operating according to laws beyond his capacity—thereby disregarding the evidence of truth—he resorts to them, believes in them, and loses sight of the truth, either due to a deficiency in his reasoning or the lack of guidance, or because his desires overpower him, leading him to disobey the guides among the prophets, messengers, and righteous scholars, since only a few follow them and few are guided by reason on their own, as is the case with the wise. Thus, the ungrateful nature of man prevails over belief in Him, as we have shown earlier in His saying: "وإنا إذا أذقنا الإنسان منا رحمة فرح بها". Therefore, following this general statement about the species, He says: (الشورى: 49) [الله ملك السماوات والأرض يخلق ما يشاء]. None from this general category are except the righteous among the human species, differing among themselves in the perfection of creation; their exception is derived from many verses, such as His saying: () لقد خلقنا الإنسان في () [التين: 4-6] أحسن تقويم ثم رددناه أسفل سافلين إلا الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات. The description "كفور" encompasses what implies disbelief in the blessing, and these two are interconnected in most cases".⁽¹⁾

Moreover, the Noble Qur'an makes it clear that this man may be granted many blessings by God, yet he neither perceives them nor gives thanks for them, and he continues to enumerate misfortunes that are far fewer than the blessings, thereby falling into ingratitude for the blessings. Ibn Kathir رحمه الله said: "God said: {وإنا إذا أذقنا الإنسان منا رحمة فرح بها} meaning: when he is granted prosperity and a blessing, he rejoices in it; {وإن تصبهم} meaning: when people are afflicted {سيئة} i.e., adversity, calamity, trial, and hardship; {فإن الإنسان كفور} meaning: the man is ungrateful for the blessing bestowed upon him (1) and only recognizes the present moment. If he is granted a blessing, he becomes arrogant and conceited, but if he is afflicted with a hardship, he becomes despairing and dejected".⁽²⁾

SECONDLY: THE FLUCTUATION OF MAN BETWEEN EASE AND HARDSHIP, HIS OSCILLATION BETWEEN FORGETTING AND REMEMBERING:

The Noble Qur'an provides a precise description of man's condition in situations of ease and adversity. When man is afflicted by trial or distress, he quickly turns to God, humbly supplicating, seeking help and relief, and remembering his need for God and his weakness before His might. But when the hardship subsides and is replaced by ease and blessing, he soon forgets that very supplication and refuge, neglecting to mention God; he may even attribute the credit to himself or behave as if he were independent of his Lord. This oscillation between forgetting and remembering reveals man's weakness and lack of patience, for he is prone to forget God's favor in times of ease and remember it only when in need, whereas the true believer is marked by a steadfast heart; he remains constantly attached to God—grateful in ease and patient in adversity—thus remaining far from this reprehensible fluctuation.

The verses that describe this fluctuation are numerous. For example, in Surat ar-Rum the Almighty brilliantly illustrates the fluctuation of people in conditions of distress and ease, saying: {وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسُ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَذَقَهُمْ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يَشْكُرُونَ (33) لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا اتَّيْنَاهُمْ فِتْنَةً وَهُمْ فَسُوفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (34) أَمْ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا فَهُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَشْكُرُونَ (35) وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرَحُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَقْنَطُونَ (36) أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ } [الروم: 33 - 37]

In his exegesis of these noble verses, Al-Sa'di رحمه الله said:

"{وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسُ ضُرٌّ} means an illness or a fear of calamity and the like. {دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ} indicates that they forget what they used to associate with Him in that condition, for they know that none can remove distress except God.

{ثُمَّ إِذَا أَذَقَهُمْ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً} means that He cured them of their illness and reassured them from their fear, {إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ} shows that some among them withdraw the repentance they had shown and resume associating partners with Him—those who can neither ward off harm nor provide benefit, neither impoverish nor enrich—thus, all this is a manifestation of disbelief in what God has granted and bestowed upon them, for He saved them from distress and removed their hardship. So, why do they not meet this magnificent

(1) At-Tahrir wa At-Tanwir (25/135, 136).

(2) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (7/216).

blessing with gratitude and maintain sincere devotion to Him in all circumstances? {يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَشْكُرُونَ} meaning that it speaks concerning what they used to associate with Him, telling them: remain firm in your polytheism and persist in your skepticism, for what you have is considered the truth while what the messengers have called you to is false.

So, is that authority present among them to compel such strong adherence to polytheism? Or have the rational proofs, auditory evidences, divine scriptures, noble messengers, and the leaders of mankind—who have most vehemently forbidden such practices and warned against the paths leading to them, decreeing the corruption of mind and religion for those who commit them—already admonished them? For their polytheism is based on no valid argument or evidence but merely on the whims of the self and the impulses of Satan.

وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرَحُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ نَصَبْنَاهُمْ سِنِيَّةً بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَقْتُلُونَ * أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

God informs us about the nature of most people in conditions of ease and distress: when God grants them mercy in the form of health, wealth, victory, and similar blessings, they rejoice in it with a conceited, heedless joy—not a joy of gratitude or one that glorifies God's blessing.

{وَإِنْ نَصَبْنَاهُمْ سِنِيَّةً} means when a calamity strikes them, {بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ} referring to the sins they have committed, {إِذَا هُمْ يَقْتُلُونَ} they despair of the removal of that poverty, illness, and the like. This is due to their ignorance and lack of understanding.

{أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ} for despair becomes baseless once one realizes that both good and evil come from God, and that the expansion or contraction of sustenance is determined by His decree, rendering all human causes insignificant. Therefore, do not, O wise one, focus merely on the apparent causes but rather set your sight on their Origin. Hence He said: {إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ}—for those who acknowledge that God bestows and withholds sustenance at His will and understand therein His wisdom, mercy, and omnipotence, drawing hearts to call upon Him in all matters of provision.

And in Surat az-Zumar, God again mentions the fluctuation of man between ease and adversity. He said: {وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضَرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهُ مُنِيبًا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلَهُ نِعْمَةً مِنْهُ نَسِيَ مَا كَانَ يَدْعُو إِلَيْهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَجَعَلَ لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ} [الزمر: 8]

Ibn 'Atiyah said: "In this verse, {الْإِنْسَانُ} is intended to denote the disbeliever, as indicated by the later description of him taking for God associates, and by His saying: {تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا}. This verse clearly indicates that the disbelievers, even though they resort to Him in times of need—albeit with uncertainty and not out of genuine faith—cannot be relied upon. And {مُنِيبًا} means one who returns to God with renewed insight.

And His statement: {ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلَهُ نِعْمَةً} may either indicate the unveiling of the previously mentioned calamity or refer to any blessing whatsoever, the term being inclusive. And {خَوَّلَهُ} means that he possesses it and exercises authority over it—not as a recompense, for one does not say {خول} in the context of reward.

Then it is negated that the supplication of this disbeliever is exclusively directed to God in response to adversity; {مِنْ قَبْلُ} implies that prior to the calamity, this disbeliever was not in the habit of supplicating, but his distress compelled him to call upon God. And {الْأَنْدَادُ} refers to the opposites that conflict, compete, and contradict one another. Mujahid explained that by {الرجال} is meant those whom they obey in disobedience to God, while others have interpreted it as referring to idols."⁽¹⁾

And Al-Tahir ibn Ashur mentions the fluctuation of the polytheists, stating: "This is an example of the oscillation of the polytheists between associating others with God in worship and displaying their need for Him, which is a clear sign of the extremity of their disbelief. The sentence is connected with {ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ} [الزمر: 6], the verse indicating that God alone is in control and deserving of gratitude, and that disbelief in Him is abhorrent. It also serves as evidence for the oneness of God by demonstrating that the polytheists, when afflicted, turn solely to Him, and when blessed, neglect to express gratitude and instead assign partners to Him.

Thus, the term {الإنسان} here is used in its general sense to denote the human species, but its generalization here is conventionally applied to a group—specifically, the polytheists—since the phrase {وجعل لله أندادا} does not apply to the believers.

And the assertion that it refers to a specific individual, such as 'Attaba ibn Rabia or Abu Jahl—cases that are exceptions beyond the general discourse—is unfounded, as these individuals and others like them belong to the same human species. Moreover, {الإنسان} is used implicitly in the context of the addressees mentioned in the phrase {فَيُبَيِّنُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ} [الزمر: 6, 7] up to "خلقكم من نفس واحدة" so it is more appropriate

(1) Taysir Al-Karim Al-Rahman (p. 641, 642).

to use {الإنسان} rather than {الناس} in order to reflect the inherent fluctuation and instability of human nature, except for those whom God has safeguarded with guidance—as evidenced by His saying: "ويقول [66] [مریم: 3] and الإنسان إذا ما ميت لَسَوْفَ أُخْرَجُ حَيًّا" [القيامة: 3] among others. And because the word {الإنسان} is fitting given the subsequent mention of forgetting in the phrase "نسي ما كان" [33]. "وإذا مسَّ النَّاسُ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ" in Surat ar-Rum

... "قل تمتع بكفرِكَ قليلا إنك من أصحاب النار"—this is a continuation meant to emphasize that the mention of the state of the disbeliever who is averse to thanking his Lord invites the listener to question the ultimate fate of such a disbeliever; that is, "O Muhammad, say to the man who has assigned partners to God"—or addressing each individual from that group—or, when using the singular form of {الإنسان}, "Say: Enjoy your disbelief for a little while, for you are among the companions of the Fire." Likewise, following this reasoning, the exclusive address later in the statement "يقول الإنسان يومئذ أين المفر" [12 - 10: القيامة: 10] reflects the same concept. And {التمتع} means temporary benefit... and it is described as slight because the duration of worldly life is minimal compared to the torment in the Hereafter, as indicated in the verse: "فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا لَآ" [التوبة: 38]. The imperative form in {تمتع} is employed as a means of warning and admonition. And the phrase {إنك من أصحاب النار} clearly states the consequence of {تمتع بكفرِكَ قليلا}, serving as an admonition regarding the disbeliever's fate in the Fire after the transient period of worldly life."⁽¹⁾

THIRDLY: THE ATTRIBUTION OF GOOD TO ONESELF AND THE DEFLECTION OF EVIL FROM ONESELF:

Among the deeply ingrained traits of the human soul is the tendency to take pride in oneself when goodness is achieved—attributing success and merit to one's own effort and competence—while striving to absolve oneself of responsibility when misfortune or failure occurs, thereby shifting the blame to circumstances or others. This inclination reflects a desire to elevate one's self-esteem by presenting an idealized self-image, which sometimes causes one to overlook the complete truth.

The tendency to credit oneself for good and to deflect evil from oneself is not merely a fleeting behavior, but a reflection of complex psychological predispositions, including self-love and the desire for self-appreciation, as well as the fear of confronting one's flaws or accepting responsibility. This oscillation—acknowledging merit in times of blessing and disavowing it during affliction—is not just a manifestation of human weakness; it is an aspect that demands deep reflection. The Qur'an, in discussing man's fluctuations, describes him as oscillating between ease and hardship, with his condition varying in both states. In times of blessing, he attributes the goodness to himself or his own merit, and when calamity strikes, he shifts the credit to fate or to the actions of another. The Noble Qur'an highlights this trait in numerous verses, as seen in:

{وَلَمَّا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَّ عَنَّا مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ لَكَفُورٌ (9) وَلَمَّا أَذَقْنَاهُ نِعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرَاءٍ مَسَّئَةٍ لَيَقُولُنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ (10) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ} [هود: 9 - 11] Al-Sam'ani explains: "The verse {وَلَمَّا أَذَقْنَاهُ نِعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرَاءٍ مَسَّئَةٍ لَيَقُولُنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي} means the person says: 'The evils have departed from me because I deserve this,' failing to recognize that they are from Allah"⁽²⁾

Allah also mentions this in other verses. He says:

{فَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوا لَنَا هَذِهِ وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَطَّيَّرُوا بِمُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَلَا إِنَّمَا طَائَرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ} [الأعراف: 131]

This verse underscores man's tendency, in times of blessing, to cling to himself—attributing favors to his own effort and imagining that he deserves them—whereas, when misfortune or calamity occurs, he is quick to blame others or the circumstances, resorting to complaint and pessimism instead of self-reflection and accountability. The divine wisdom behind highlighting this behavior lies in exposing man's tendency to deny Allah's favor during times of prosperity and to overlook the fact that every blessing or trial comes from Allah according to His wisdom and justice. The man who credits his blessings to himself and accuses others for his misfortunes strays from the balanced faith that recognizes goodness as a favor from Allah and affliction as a test requiring patience. As Al-Shawkani states: "When they receive goodness, they say: 'This is for us'—reflecting a self-attribute characteristic found in abundant rain, fertile

(1) Al-Tahrir wa Al-Tanwir (23/342-343).

(2) Tafsir Al-Sam'ani (2/416).

crops, and affordable prices; yet when misfortune strikes, they hastily blame Moses and those with him".⁽¹⁾

Even more astonishing is that in both prosperity and adversity they display ingratitude. Al-Tahir ibn Ashur remarks: "This demonstrates that while Allah's blessings were abundant for them, they were reluctant to show gratitude; and when misfortunes—though rare—befell them, they attributed these evils to Moses and his followers. In both cases, they are ungrateful for the blessings and unjust toward Moses and his companions".⁽²⁾

Among the verses evidencing this is Allah's statement:

{فَإِذَا مَنَّ الْإِنْسَانُ ضُرًّا دَعَانَا ثُمَّ إِذَا حَوَّلْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً مِنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ بَلْ هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (49) قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (50) فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَالَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ سَيَّصِبُ بِهِمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ (51) أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ} [الزمر: 49 - 52]

These verses highlight an important aspect of man's fluctuating behavior in dealing with blessings and trials. By nature, man is relentless in seeking and desiring goodness, yet when confronted with evils—such as illness, poverty, or other calamities—he quickly falls into despair, forgetting the previous favors of Allah. And when a blessing follows hardship, he attributes it solely to himself and his effort, as if it were a right he earned rather than a favor from Allah.

Furthermore, he contradictorily denies the Hereafter, mistakenly believing that worldly blessings indicate a special status with Allah, deluding himself into thinking he holds a unique favor with Him even amid his heedlessness and ingratitude.

These verses invite us to deeply reflect upon these contradictory traits and to realign our path with true faith and certainty. Rather than attributing goodness to ourselves, we must recognize it as a favor from Allah; and instead of turning away in prosperity and succumbing to despair in adversity, we ought to be grateful and patient in all circumstances.

Al-Tabari explains: "Whatever wellness, health, and safety you possess in your bodies, and whatever increase you see in your wealth, is bestowed solely by Allah, for it is all from Him and in His hands. Then, when misfortune strikes you in the form of disease or hardship, you cry out to Allah for relief".⁽³⁾

Ibn 'Atiyyah, in his exegesis, highlights the contradiction in human nature regarding their relationship with Allah, as they worship and venerate idols yet abandon them in times of distress. He states:

"This is an argument that compels idol worshippers to acknowledge the contradiction in their actions. They worship and hold their idols in high regard, but when calamity strikes, they discard them, forget about them, and turn instead to the Creator, the Originator, the Lord of the heavens and the earth. The term 'الإنسان' (human) in this verse refers to mankind in general.

The term 'حَوَّلْنَاهُ' means 'We granted him ownership.' According to Al-Zajjaj and others, 'تحويل' (bestowal) refers to giving something without requiring compensation.

The term 'نعمة' (blessing) here is broad and includes all forms of generosity that Allah bestows upon His servant, such as the removal of hardship, health, security, and wealth. This meaning is reinforced by the phrase: 'يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ' and 'إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ', as well as the mention of personal effort (earning). Similarly, the pronoun in 'وَتُتِيهِ' can be understood in multiple ways. It may refer to wealth specifically, as previously mentioned, or it may refer to the preceding concept since 'نعمة' (blessing) encompasses both masculine and feminine nouns. Alternatively, 'ما' in 'إِنَّمَا' could function as a relative pronoun meaning 'that which,' in which case the phrase would be explanatory rather than restrictive.

The phrase 'عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ' is in the accusative case, serving as an adverbial phrase if 'ما' is understood as restrictive. However, if 'ما' is taken as a relative pronoun, then 'عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ' functions as the predicate of an omitted subject, meaning 'it is based on knowledge.' This could imply one of two things: either the person believes that their wealth results from their own knowledge of trade and business, as stated by Qatadah—indicating self-admiration and arrogance—or that they assume their wealth is granted to them based on divine knowledge of their worthiness, believing they have received what they deserve from Allah and that nothing can harm them. This second interpretation reflects delusion and false hope in Allah's favor.

Allah then states: 'بَلْ هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ' meaning that the matter is not as they claim, but rather, this is a test and trial for them. He further informs that previous disbelievers, such as Qarun and others, made similar claims, but their wealth and acquisitions did not benefit them. Likewise, these present-day disbelievers will not be saved by their possessions.

(1) Fath Al-Qadir by Al-Shawkani (2/270).

(2) Al-Tahrir wa Al-Tanwir (9/65).

(3) Tafsir al-Tabari (21/303).

Then, as a warning, Allah states that the previous disbelievers suffered the consequences of their actions, and those who commit injustice through disbelief among the current generation will also suffer the consequences of their deeds. This is a divine statement that was fulfilled, as seen in the events of Badr and other instances. The phrase 'معجزين' (escaping) means that they will not be able to flee or save themselves.

Allah then affirms the reality of provision and blessings by stating that He alone expands provision for some people and restricts it for others according to His will and prior knowledge. It is not determined by a person's intelligence or incompetence. The phrase *وَمَنْ قُدِرَ* means 'He constricts,' as in the verse: *وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ* [At-Talaq: 7].⁽¹⁾

In Surah Fussilat, there is a precise analysis and an astonishing exposition of the nature of the human soul. Allah says: { لَا يَسْأَلُ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ دُعَاءِ الْخَيْرِ وَإِنْ مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيُيْسُ قَنُوطٌ (49) وَلَنْ أَذْقَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَرْأٍ مَسْتَكْهُ { لَيَقُولَنَّ هَذَا لِي وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِنْ رُجِعْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّ لِي عِنْدَهُ لَلْخَسَنَىٰ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ لَيَقُولَنَّ هَذَا لِي وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِنْ رُجِعْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّ لِي عِنْدَهُ لَلْخَسَنَىٰ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ } [Fussilat: 49-51].

These verses present a clear picture of human nature and its fluctuations in dealing with good and evil. By nature, a person never tires of seeking and striving for goodness. However, when afflicted with hardship, they quickly succumb to despair and hopelessness, forgetting the past blessings of God. If relief comes after difficulty, they attribute it to their own effort, saying, "This is mine," as if it were an earned right rather than a favor from God.

Another contradiction in human behavior is the denial of the Hereafter and the assumption that worldly blessings indicate a special status with God. Such a person deludes themselves into believing that they are destined for goodness in the Hereafter, even while remaining heedless and ungrateful.

These verses invite reflection on these conflicting human traits and urge a correction of one's path through faith and certainty. Instead of attributing goodness to ourselves, we must recognize it as a gift from God. Instead of turning away in times of ease and despairing in hardship, we should remain grateful and patient in all circumstances.

Al-Qurtubi states: "The phrase 'لا يسأل الإنسان من دعاء الخير' means that he does not grow weary of seeking goodness. Here, 'good' refers to wealth, health, power, and honor. Al-Suddi said that 'man' in this verse refers to the disbeliever. It was also said to refer specifically to Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughirah, or to Utbah and Shaybah, the sons of Rabi'ah, and Umayyah ibn Khalaf. In a variant reading by Abdullah, the verse reads, 'لا يسأل الإنسان من دعاء المال.' As for the phrase 'وإن مسه الشر', it refers to poverty and illness, and 'فَيُيْسُ' means that he loses hope in God's mercy."

It has been said that "يُيْسُ" refers to losing hope in the response to his prayers, while "قَنُوطٌ" signifies having a bad opinion of his Lord. Another interpretation is that "يُيْسُ" means he loses hope that his suffering will end, while "قَنُوطٌ" means he believes his hardship will be permanent—both meanings are closely related.

Regarding the phrase "ولن أذقاه رحمة منا", this refers to prosperity, relief, and wealth after having suffered distress, illness, hardship, or poverty. The statement "ليقولن هذا لي" means that he believes he deserves it from God because of his deeds, viewing the blessing as an entitlement rather than a test. He fails to realize that God tests people through both blessings and trials to distinguish gratitude from ingratitude and patience from impatience. Ibn Abbas said that the phrase "هذا لي" means "this is from myself."

The phrase "وما أظن الساعة قائمة ولن رجعت إلى ربي إن لي عنده للحسنى" refers to the assumption that he is destined for Paradise, with the emphatic "I am" confirming his certainty. He wishes for rewards without effort. Al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib remarked that a disbeliever harbors two false hopes: in this world, he says, "لن رجعت إلى ربي إن لي عنده للحسنى", and in the Hereafter, he will say, "يا ليتنا نرد ولا نكذب بآيات", [An-Naba: 40].

As for "فلننبئن الذين كفروا بما عملوا", it means that God will surely recompense them, as He has sworn to do so. The phrase "ولنذيقنهم من عذاب غليظ" refers to severe punishment.

Regarding the phrase "وإذا أنعمنا على الإنسان أعرض ونأى بجانبه", this refers to the disbeliever who turns away from Islam and distances himself from it. Ibn Abbas stated that it refers specifically to Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, Shaybah ibn Rabi'ah, and Umayyah ibn Khalaf, who rejected Islam and kept their distance from it. The phrase "نأى بجانبه" means to arrogantly refrain from submission to the truth and to act with pride toward the messengers of God. Some have interpreted "نأى" to mean "distanced himself," as in classical Arabic usage. The poet Al-Nabighah said:

"فإنك كالليل الذي هو مدركي... إن خلت أن المنتأى عنك واسع"

(Indeed, you are like the night that inevitably overtakes me, even if I imagine that distance from you is vast.)

(1) Al-Muharrar al-Wajiz (4/535, 536).

As for "وإذا مسه الشر فذو دعاء عريض," it means that when hardship befalls him, he engages in excessive supplication. In Arabic, "length" and "breadth" are often used to signify abundance. It is said, "He spoke at length" and "He made an extensive supplication" to indicate an excess in speech or prayer. Ibn Abbas stated that "ذو دعاء عريض" means "he is full of pleading and supplication." A disbeliever acknowledges his Lord in times of adversity but forgets Him in times of ease⁽¹⁾

And this is a human nature—except for those who transform themselves through Islam, gaining an understanding of both this world and the Hereafter, and realizing that both blessings and trials come from Allah, the Almighty.

Al-Sa'di states:

"This is an account of human nature as it is, showing its lack of patience and endurance—whether in times of ease or hardship—except for those whom Allah has elevated to a state of perfection. He says: { لَا يَسْأَلُمُ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ دُعَاءِ الْخَيْرِ } meaning that a person never tires of asking Allah for wealth, children, and other worldly desires. He continues to seek them endlessly, never satisfied with little or much. Even if he were to acquire great fortunes, he would still yearn for more.

{ وَإِنْ مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ } refers to any adversity, such as illness, poverty, or various afflictions. { فَيَبْئُوسُ قَنُوطٌ }—he despairs of Allah's mercy and believes that this hardship will lead to his ruin. He becomes disheartened when circumstances do not align with his desires.

However, those who believe and perform righteous deeds react differently. When they receive blessings, prosperity, and the things they love, they express gratitude to Allah while fearing that these favors might be a form of enticement or a test. And when they face hardships—whether in their health, wealth, or children—they remain patient, placing their hope in their Lord's grace, never succumbing to despair."⁽²⁾

I conclude this discussion with what Allah has mentioned in His Book regarding the fact that all blessings come from Him, as He says: { وَمَا بِكُمْ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْأَرُونَ (53) ثُمَّ إِذَا كُشِفَ الضُّرُّ عَنْكُمْ إِذَا { فَرِيقٌ مِنْكُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ [An-Nahl: 53, 54].

These verses invite a deep reflection on one's self and behavior regarding Allah's blessings and trials. They emphasize that every blessing a person enjoys originates solely from Allah, who bestows them without a partner. However, when hardship and affliction strike, human nature instinctively turns to Allah in sincere supplication. Yet, as soon as relief comes, some people revert to heedlessness and associate others with Allah.

At-Tabari explains: "Whatever well-being, health, and safety you have in your bodies, and whatever growth you experience in your wealth, it is solely from Allah, for all of it belongs to Him and is under His control. {Then, if harm touches you}—meaning, if you are afflicted with sickness, disease, or hardship in your livelihood—{you cry out to Him}—meaning, you call upon Allah with cries and supplications, seeking His relief from your distress."⁽³⁾

Fourthly: The fluctuation of man between denying his innate disposition and returning to it:

The sound innate disposition is the very foundation upon which God created man. It is what enables him to perceive great truths such as faith in God and His oneness, the love of good, and the following of truth. Yet man, influenced by his surrounding environment, desires, and passions, may deny this innate disposition—thereby straying from his proper path and becoming immersed in doubts and sins, neglecting the principles that have been deeply implanted in his soul. Nevertheless, this innate disposition does not vanish completely; rather, it remains alive and latent within him, emerging during crises and trials. At such times, man returns to his origin and innate nature, turning to God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, seeking salvation and help. This fluctuation between denial and return reflects man's weakness in the face of his inner inclinations and life's realities, but it also shows that the faith-based innate disposition is the greatest foundation within the human soul—one that restores him to righteousness no matter how far he has strayed or deviated.

Numerous verses have demonstrated this meaning. For example, in Surat al-An'am the Almighty (جل وعلا) makes clear His closeness to His servants and calls them to His oneness with an overwhelming argument—that very innate disposition which God has instilled in them, and which awakens in times of calamities and disasters, causing them to turn to Him alone and invoke only Him (سبحانه وتعالى). Then, the Almighty (عز وجل) explains that when He afflicts them with such trials, it is only that He wishes for them to return to their innate disposition and to unite their Lord, but their hearts have become hardened, and Satan has adorned for them their shirk and sins.

(1) Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān (15/372-373).

(2) Tafsir As-Sa'di (p. 752).

(3) Tafsir At-Tabari (17/224).

God says:

﴿ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَدْعُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (40) بَلْ إِيَّاهُ تَدْعُونَ فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِنْ شَاءَ وَتَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ (41) وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَى أُمَمٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ (42) قَلِيلًا إِنْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسًا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (43) فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَحَخْنَّا عَلَيْهِمُ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى إِذَا فَرُّوا بِمَا آوُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴾ [الأنعام: 40 - 44]

These verses highlight a deeply ingrained truth in human nature: in times of hardship and distress, a person instinctively returns to their Creator, feeling an urgent need for God and sincerely calling upon Him, abandoning all that they associated with Him in times of ease. When calamity strikes or the final hour approaches, human nature acknowledges that only God has the power to remove harm, for He alone is the true refuge who controls all affairs.

However, the verses also draw attention to the state of certain peoples whose hearts remained hardened despite affliction. Instead of returning to their natural disposition and humbling themselves before God, they clung to their misguidance, and Satan adorned their deeds for them. When they turned away from remembrance and the signs of God, He overwhelmed them with blessings and opened for them the gates of everything, leading them to arrogance and heedlessness until He seized them suddenly while they were unaware, turning their joy into sorrow and regret.

Ibn Kathir explains this meaning, stating that God does as He wills, governing His creation as He pleases, and that no one can overturn His decree. He alone, with no partners, is the one who answers supplications when asked. Thus, when divine punishment or the final hour arrives, people do not call upon anyone but Him, knowing that none other can avert such calamities. Yet, once He removes their affliction, they forget their previous supplications and return to their former ways.

God sent messengers to past nations, afflicting them with poverty and hardship, as well as diseases and ailments, so they might humble themselves before Him. However, instead of turning to God in supplication and humility, their hearts became even harder, and Satan made their wrongful deeds appear attractive to them.

When they ignored the warnings sent to them and turned away from divine guidance, God granted them even more worldly provisions, giving them everything they desired. This was a form of divine entrapment and gradual punishment, leading them to arrogance and heedlessness. Then, when they became intoxicated with their success and wealth, He seized them suddenly, leaving them in utter despair and regret"⁽¹⁾

In Surah Al-Isra, Allah clarifies how people fluctuate between hardship and ease when traveling by sea. Allah says: ﴿ وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُونَ إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ أَعْرَضْتُمْ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا (67) أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يُفْرِغَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِنْ يُخْسِفُ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ وَكِيلًا (68) أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يُعِيدَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَى فَيَرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِنْ يُخْسِفُ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ وَكِيلًا ﴾ [Al-Isra: 67 - 69]

How great and severe is this warning and admonition for anyone who turns away from their Lord when afflicted by calamity. In distress, they sincerely call upon Allah alone, yet once they feel safe and are saved, they return to their previous state. Allah, the Almighty, emphasizes that their deities cannot save them in times of hardship; only He can.

Al-Qurtubi explains human nature and how even disbelievers instinctively return to their Creator in times of distress, remembering Him in hardship. He states: "The word 'distress' encompasses the fear of drowning and the inability to move forward, along with the terrifying state of the sea's turbulence and waves. The phrase 'ضل من تدعون إلا إياه' means that all whom they invoke besides Him are lost and useless, signifying the worthlessness of those they consider gods besides Allah. The meaning in this verse is that disbelievers believe their idols are intercessors with special merits. Yet, by innate nature, each of them knows—without being able to deny it—that idols have no power in severe crises. Allah exposes them to a situation at sea where all means fail. 'فلما نجاهم إلى البر أعرضتم' means they turned away from sincerity upon reaching safety. 'وكان الإنسان كفورا' refers here to the disbeliever, though some say it signifies that human nature is inherently ungrateful for blessings, except for those whom Allah protects. The term 'human' here refers to the general nature of mankind."⁽²⁾

And Al-Shawkani explains that the disbelievers know, even before affliction befalls them, that their idols are of no benefit in times of distress, yet they continue to worship them instead of Allah. Al-Shawkani says:

"And when distress touches you"—meaning the fear of drowning at sea—"those whom you invoke are lost" from your minds, and you no longer seek rescue from those you used to call upon besides Him, whether it be an idol, a jinn, an angel, or a human being. "Except Him alone," for you place your hope in*

(1) Ibn Kathir's Tafsir (3/256).

(2) Tafsir Al-Qurtubi (10/291).

His mercy and relief. The exception here is discontinuous. The meaning of the verse is that the disbelievers believe their idols and other deities to be beneficial to them in circumstances other than this one. However, in this particular situation, each of them instinctively knows—without being able to deny it—that idols and similar entities have no power or effect. *"But when He delivers you to land, you turn away,"* abandoning sincerity to Allah and His oneness, returning to calling upon and seeking help from your idols. *"And man is ever ungrateful,"* meaning excessively ungrateful for the blessings of Allah. This serves as an explanation for what preceded it, indicating that in times of hardship, they cling to Allah's mercy, but in times of ease, they turn away from Him"⁽¹⁾

FIFTH: THE WISDOM OF GOD IN MAKING MAN FLUCTUATE BETWEEN EASE AND HARDSHIP:

Man's fluctuation between ease and hardship is not arbitrary; rather, it is part of God's profound wisdom in His creation. God has fashioned human life as a mixture of blessings and trials so that it may serve as a test that reveals the true nature of one's faith, patience, and contentment with God's decree. In times of ease, man's gratitude and acknowledgment of God's favor are manifest, while in times of hardship his patience and trust in God's mercy and ability to relieve distress are put to the test.

The trial of both ease and hardship aims to purify and reform the soul; it is a means to sanctify the heart and draw man closer to his Creator. Moreover, this fluctuation underscores man's inherent weakness and his perpetual need for God, serving as an incentive for him to return to his Lord in every circumstance—whether in prosperity through gratitude or in adversity through supplication and earnest entreaty.

This divine wisdom reminds man that he is on a continuous journey of learning and self-purification, and that this world is but a testing ground on which his ultimate fate in the Hereafter will be determined by his response to life's fluctuations and the degree of his steadfastness in faith and obedience despite changing conditions.

God has explained this wisdom of alternation in His turning of people between ease and hardship: {وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالصَّرَاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضُرَّغُونَ (94) ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ الْحَسَنَةَ حَتَّىٰ عَفَوْا وَقَالُوا قَدْ مَسَّ آبَاءَنَا الضَّرَّاءُ وَالسَّرَّاءُ فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (95)} [الأعراف: 94، 95]

The meaning of these two verses is as follows: Whatever prophet We sent to a town to call them to the worship of God and to forbid them from their idolatry—but whose people denied him—we afflicted them with trials and hardships. We afflicted their bodies with diseases and ailments and their wealth with poverty and need, in the hope that they might become subdued, turn to their Lord, and return to the truth. Then We replaced the initial adverse condition with a favorable one, so that they enjoyed well-being in their bodies and abundance and prosperity in their wealth—as a grace granted to them, perhaps in the hope that they would be grateful. Yet they did not benefit from all that, nor did they consider or take heed of their condition, saying, "This is the usual state of affairs for our forefathers—one day is good and one day is bad," as had befallen our ancestors before; thus, We seized them suddenly with punishment while they were secure, unaware of the impending destruction.⁽²⁾

These verses shed light on God's wisdom in alternately turning people between ease and hardship, clarifying that the trial by afflictions and blessings is part of God's method of dealing with nations. When God sends a prophet to a people, one of the means to call them to faith is to subject them to trials—by means of hardship and distress—in order to stir their hearts and remind them of their need for God, so that they may supplicate and turn to Him. Then, if they do not respond to that supplication and return to God, He changes their condition, removing the adverse and granting them the good and the blessings as another test that demonstrates their gratitude and steadfastness; but if they become arrogant and ungrateful, thinking that the fluctuation of circumstances is merely a natural occurrence—as it happened to their forefathers without any awareness or regard for God's wisdom—they expose themselves to being suddenly struck with God's punishment while remaining heedless. Al-Qurtubi explains: "Know that God has taken them in hardship and in ease; yet they did not shrink away nor were they grateful. They said, 'Our forefathers were afflicted with hardship and blessings, so we are like them.' Thus, We seized them suddenly—i.e., abruptly—so that their regret might be even greater".⁽³⁾

Among the verses highlighting this divine wisdom is His statement:

(1) Fath al-Qadir by Al-Shawkani (3/289).

(2) Tafsir Al-Muyassar (p. 162).

(3) Tafsir Al-Qurtubi (7/252).

{أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ الْفُلَّكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ لِيُرِيَكُمْ مِنْ آيَاتِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (31) وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَوْجٌ كَالظَّلْلِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُورٍ} [لقمان: 31, 32]

These verses demonstrate one aspect of God's wisdom in making man fluctuate between ease and hardship by portraying a realistic scene that reflects the nature of the human soul. God harnesses the ship to sail on the sea by His grace—a sign indicating His power and mercy, so that He may reveal His signs to you. But in times of distress, such as when a massive wave engulfs and terrifies people, they turn solely to God in sincere supplication, for in that moment their innate disposition awakens and they become acutely aware of their utter helplessness before His might.

However, this trial of affliction and the subsequent deliverance reveal a contrast in people's responses: some remain moderate in their faith and gratitude toward God, while others completely deny God's signs after being saved, exhibiting ingratitude and disbelief. This condition serves as a divine test that reveals the true nature of a servant's faith: does he acknowledge and thank God for His favor in both ease and hardship, or does he revert to negligence and disbelief after deliverance?

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) explains: "God informs us that it is He who has harnessed the sea so that ships may sail on it by His command—that is, by His grace and orchestration. For had He not endowed the water with the necessary force to carry ships, they would not have sailed. That is why He said, to show you one of His signs—indeed, in that there are signs for every patient and grateful person (i.e., one who is patient in adversity and thankful in ease). Then He said: {وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَوْجٌ كَالظَّلْلِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ} and said: [العنكبوت: 65] {وَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِّ}." (1)

Then He said: "So when He delivered them to the land, among them there were those who were moderate." Mujahid explained that this "moderate" refers to a disbeliever—implying that he interpreted "moderate" here as one who is ungrateful—as when God delivered them to the land, they still associated partners with Him [العنكبوت: 65]. Ibn Zaid stated: "It refers to the one who is moderate in his deeds." This is what Ibn Zaid intended in his explanation of the verse: [فاطر: 32] {فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ}. Here, "the moderate" is the one who is average in his actions; it might also refer to one who, after witnessing such tremendous calamities and awe-inspiring signs in the sea, should have responded with complete dedication in worship and proactive pursuit of good—but if he remains moderate in that regard, he is deficient. And God knows best. And His saying: {وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُورٍ} means that every "khattar" (traitor) is ungrateful—that is, ungrateful for the blessings, not thanking them but neglecting them—as explained by Mujahid, Al-Hasan, Qatadah, and Malik from Zaid ibn Aslam. (1)

Among the verses that indicate man's fluctuation is His statement:

{وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ فَإِذَا أُوذِيَ فِي اللَّهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللَّهِ وَلَئِنْ جَاءَ نَصْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ أَوَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ} [بما في صُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ (10) وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ} [العنكبوت: 10, 11]

Al-Sa'di explains: "When God mentioned that it is necessary to test those who claim faith—so that the truthful may be distinguished from the liars—He made it clear that there is a group of people who lack patience in trials and steadfastness in the face of upheavals. Hence, He said: {وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ فَإِذَا} (by means of affliction, or loss of wealth, or humiliation) so that they might revert from their religion and reexamine falsehood; {جَعَلَ فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللَّهِ} meaning that He makes this trial akin to the punishment of Allah, thus deterring them from faith and steadfastness—just as punishment deters what causes it. {وَلَئِنْ جَاءَ نَصْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ} because it aligns with their desires. This type of people is similar to those about whom Allah said: {وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَغُذُّ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ} and {أَوَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ}—thus informing you about this group, whose condition has been described, so that you may understand the extent of His knowledge and the vastness of His wisdom. {وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ} means that He has decreed trials and tests for them, to reveal His knowledge of them and to reward them according to what is apparent, not merely what He knows in abstraction, because they might claim before God that if they were tested, they would remain steadfast". (2)

Likewise, among the verses is His statement:

{فَإِذَا مَنَّ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَرًّا دَعَا نُوًّا إِذَا حَوْلَاهُ نِعْمَةً مَنَّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ بَلْ هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (49) قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (50) فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَالَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ سَيُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا وَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ (51) أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ} [الزمر: 49 - 52]

Al-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) states: "And His saying, (But it is a trial), means that He, exalted be His mention, said: 'Rather, We granted them that blessing after the hardship which afflicted

(1) Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Azim (6/314).

(2) Tafsir Tayseer Al-Kareem Al-Rahman (p. 627).

them as a trial for them,' i.e., a test with which We tried them (but most of them), because of their ignorance and misguided opinions, (do not know) for what reason they were given that".⁽¹⁾

Finally, regarding the wisdom behind God making man fluctuate between ease and hardship, we find that it is not without purpose. This fluctuation is part of God's grand design in His creation; He has made human life a blend of blessings and trials so that it may serve as a test that reveals the authenticity of one's faith, patience, and contentment with His decree. In times of ease, man's gratitude and acknowledgment of God's favor are evident, while in times of hardship his patience and trust in God's mercy and power to alleviate distress are tested.

The alternating of ease and hardship serves to purify and reform the soul, sanctifying the heart and drawing man ever closer to his Creator. It reminds him that his journey is one of continuous learning and spiritual refinement, and that this world is merely a testing ground on which his ultimate fate in the Hereafter will be determined by how he responds to life's fluctuations and how steadfast he remains in faith and obedience despite changing conditions.

For example, God says:

{أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ الْفُلَّكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ لِيُرِيَكُمْ مِنْ آيَاتِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (31) وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَوْجٌ كَالظَّلْلِ دَعَا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُورٍ { [لقمان: 31, 32]}

And in Surat al-Isra, God illustrates the fluctuation of people while they are on a ship at sea between hardship and ease:

{وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُونَ إِلَّا إِلَهُهُ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ أَعْرَضْتُمْ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا (67) أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يُخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ وَكِيلًا (68) أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يُعِيدَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَى فَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِنَ الرِّيحِ فَيَغْرِقَكُمْ بِمَا كَفَرْتُمْ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهِ تَبِيعًا { [الإسراء: 67 - 69]}

God's grand wisdom in making man fluctuate between ease and hardship is thus revealed: through affliction, man is driven to return to his innate disposition, to call upon his Creator with sincerity, and to recognize that none but God can alleviate his distress. Yet when He grants relief and abundance, some become heedless and even arrogant, forgetting that all blessings are tests and favors from God.

As Al-Qurtubi explains, "They believed that what befell them—both the hardships and the blessings—was merely the natural course of events as experienced by their forefathers, rather than an explicit test from God. Consequently, when We suddenly afflicted them with punishment, they were caught unawares, even though they were secure."

Moreover, consider the verse:

{... أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ الْفُلَّكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ لِيُرِيَكُمْ مِنْ آيَاتِهِ {

which demonstrates how God harnesses the ship to sail on the sea by His grace—a sign of His power and mercy—and how, when a mighty wave engulfs the people, they turn solely to Him in sincere supplication, for their innate disposition awakens in the face of overwhelming adversity.

The fluctuation between ease and hardship is a means for God to test and purify the human soul; it exposes man's vulnerability and his continuous need for divine assistance. Ultimately, it urges him to return to God in every state—whether in times of plenty, by offering gratitude, or in times of need, by resorting to prayer and supplication.

Lastly, God says:

{وَمَا بِكُمْ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْأَرُونَ (53) ثُمَّ إِذَا كُفِّتِ الضُّرُّ عَنْكُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْكُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ { [النحل: 53, 54]}

These verses call upon man to deeply reflect on his behavior toward the blessings and trials of God, reminding him that every favor is solely from God, and that in times of affliction He alone is the true refuge.

CONCLUSION:

Reflecting on the nature of man—his oscillation between his innate, sound disposition and the influences of desires and surrounding circumstances—reveals a profound aspect of human weakness and his perpetual lack of reliance on God. By nature, man turns to his Lord in times of hardship, supplicating, turning to Him with humility, and seeking deliverance from distress; it is at such moments that the clarity of his innate disposition and the purity of his soul emerge, untouched by external influences. However, when God removes the affliction and bestows ease upon man, heedlessness quickly overcomes him, and his desires lead him to ignore God's favor and forget his constant need for his Lord.

The Qur'anic verses narrate this recurring pattern of human behavior with magnificent eloquence, directing man toward recognizing his true nature and striving to improve his relationship with his Creator.

(1) Tafsir Al-Tabari (21/304).

Such human conduct prompts us to pause and reflect on the importance of remaining steadfast in faith and righteous deeds in every circumstance, especially since God has enjoined upon us to be grateful in both ease and hardship. Gratitude for blessings and acknowledgment of the divine favor are the keys to happiness in this world and the Hereafter, and they bring about God's pleasure.

Thus, these realities call us to continuously examine ourselves and to work on strengthening our faith and adhering to our spiritual values at all times—whether we are experiencing blessings and ease or enduring moments of hardship and trial. Steadfastness in truth and gratitude to God in every condition is the way to fulfill the ultimate purpose of our existence in this life, which is to worship God alone and to strive for His pleasure and generosity in both this world and the Hereafter.

KEY FINDINGS:

- 1/ Man appears weak and deficient when afflicted, as he turns to God with supplication and earnest entreaty.
- 2/ When affliction is lifted and blessings return, heedlessness swiftly overcomes him, causing him to forget his prior supplications.
- 3/ The Qur'anic verses reveal a tendency in man toward heedlessness and ingratitude after trials have passed.
- 4/ This nature is clearly evident in the behavior of a man who sincerely supplicates during hardship and then forgets once deliverance is achieved.
- 5/ Excessive joy and arrogance often accompany the restoration or receipt of a blessing.
- 6/ The true believer remains patient in adversity and grateful in prosperity, which extricates him from this reprehensible cycle
- 7/ Some individuals worship God superficially—tying their faith to circumstances—which leads them to overturn their stance when trials occur.
- 8/ Faith, patience, and gratitude help man remain steadfast in facing life's fluctuations.
- 9/ These verses offer profound lessons that prompt reflection on the manifestations of human fluctuation and the need to confront them with unwavering faith
- 10/ Man is characterized by his oscillation between ease and hardship; in times of distress, he turns to God with supplication, whereas in times of ease he neglects to remember Him.
- 11/ Man shows weakness in maintaining his faith when circumstances change, reflecting his inherently fluctuating tendencies.
- 12/ The Qur'anic texts provide a precise description of the fluctuating behavior of man, highlighting his need for self-examination.
- 13/ Islam calls on man to achieve an equilibrium in faith by linking all that befalls him—good or bad—to God's will and wisdom.
- 14/ The Qur'anic texts present these realities in a profoundly moving style that compels man to reflect on his weakness and return to his Lord.
- 15/ The Qur'an emphasizes man's return to God in times of affliction, as seen in His statement: **قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ** {إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ...} [الأنعام: 40-44]
- 16/ The trial of affliction calls for supplication and returning to God, as in His statement: **وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي** {قَرْيَةٍ مِنْ نَبِيٍّ...} [الأعراف: 94-95]
- 17/ Man's inherent weakness in the face of life's fluctuations renders him in constant need of God in all his conditions.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1/ **Rely on Research in Positive Psychology:** Apply the findings of studies that show gratitude and positive thinking enhance mental health and reduce anxiety and stress.
- 2/ **Conduct Comparative Studies:** Undertake academic research to examine differences in human behavior between individuals during crises and times of ease, in order to identify influencing factors and improve our understanding of these patterns.
- 3/ **Explore the Qur'anic Approach to Addressing Sin and the Return to Obedience:** Study the verses and hadiths that focus on repentance and seeking forgiveness as means to return to the straight path.

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