

Faith

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Abstract

This article emphasises that faith provides an internal peace and calmness in the believers' spiritual world. The word *iman* already expresses reliance and composure. The article analyzes the effect of faith for the believer inwardly according to Qur'anic texts and commentaries by Islamic scholars. Some places touch on depression as the result of unbelief in the believer's spiritual world.

Key Words: *Iman*, Presence, Serenity, psychological troubles, punishment.

1.1 Introduction

In order to comprehend the importance of faith and the things faith is able to do, it is necessary to understand it correctly and analyze it in a relevant way. It is a common view that the interpretation of a case in scholarship is possible through experiencing that case mentally and going back to the historical context in which the case had taken place. Thus, in order to comprehend the importance of faith, it is necessary to do so.

1.2 Develop a Feeling of Empathy

It is possible to develop empathy through the anecdotes of people who were associated with acts of faith. For example; empathizing with Hz. İbrahim's call to sacrifice his son İsmail and with the submission of İsmail in sacrificing his own soul. If we can empathize with him, we can comprehend the compassion of İbrahim when he says "*Oh my dear son*" while *sacrificing his son* and that a great sense of duty dominates him when attempting this sacrifice, and we can also comprehend the firm attitude of İsmail in risking his life (see As-Saffat, 37/102). This can only be achieved through faith.

1.3 Go back to the historical period when that case took place

We can develop such empathy by going back to the historical period in question and analyzing the historical context when those who carried out acts of faith were involved in the struggle of amalgamation. We comprehend it not by analyzing this struggle of amalgamation through the environment of freedom of thought that is considered a

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natural right in the sense of human rights in the 21st century but by going back to the historical period when people were crucified, stoned to death and their hands cut because of their ideas (see Al-A'raf, 7/120-124; Hud, 11/91; Al-Kahf, 18/20; Maryam, 19/46; Ya.sin, 36/18; Ad-Dukhan, 44/20).

In such an environment, having an attitude of risking one's life is possible only through faith. So this article will examine what faith is (*iman*) and its inner peace.

Faith changed the course of history. It is the greatest elixir and source of power that moves mountains and provides a base for going fearlessly into danger.

Faith is a very important thing in Islam as well. We say, as Izutsu points out: "Belief is the real fountain-head of all Islamic virtues; it creates them all, and no virtue is thinkable in Islam, which is not based on the sincere faith in God and His revelations."¹

The word for believing in Islam is *iman*. This concept is derived from the root *e-m-n*, which is the soul's confidence and the disappearance of fear.² This is *iman's becoming* (*sayrurat*) which means *âslama*. Here, to say *âslama* means "are *zâ silmin*, that is, to find confidence and to reach safety."³ So, to say *âmana* here means *sare zâ amnin*, namely, to find confidence and safety for one's soul. For this reason, *Zamakhshari* refers to an Arabic saying *Ma Amantu an acida sahabatan* (*I didn't find a companion*), namely, I did not trust (a companion), and they (Arabs) by the word *âmana* aim for confidence and serenity."⁴ We can find this meaning in the following verses:

It is those who believe and confuse not their belief with wrong that are (truly) secure, for they are (rightly) guided. (6/82)

Those who disbelieve and obstruct (others) from the way of God will have wasted their deeds. But Those who believe and do right, and believe what has been revealed to Muhammad, which is the truth from their Lord, will have their faults condoned by Him and set their hearts (*bal*) full of serenity and presence. That is because those who refuse

¹ Toshihiko, Izutsu, *The Structure of the Ethical terms in the Qur'an* (Tokyo: Keio University, 1959), p. 173.

² Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, Abul-Qasim Husayn ibn Muhammad *Al-Mufradat fi gharib al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dâr al-Ma'rifa), p. 239.

³ See Sad al-Din Masud ibn Umar ibn Abd Allah, al-Taftazani, *Tadrij al-adani sharh al-zanjani* (Istanbul: Salah Bilici publishing house), p. 24; Al-Isfahani, *Ibid.* p. 239.

⁴ Mahmud b. 'Umar, al-Zamakhshari, *Al-Kashshâf'an haqâ'iq al-tanzil wa 'uyun al-aqâwil fi wujuh' al-ta'wil* (Beirut: Dâr al-kitab al-Arabi, 1987), 1: 37; Baydawî, Abdullah b. Umar, *An-varû al-tanzil wa asrarû al-te'wil* (Min Khashiyeti Shaikhzâde) (Istanbul: Hakikat publishing house, 1991), 1: 84.

to believe only follow what is false; but those who believe follow the truth from their Lord. That is how God gives men perception of wisdom. (47/1-3)

According to some commentators, in the last verse *bal* refers to their outward condition and situation,¹ but according to others this concept approaches the meaning of condition, the ease of life, or the sense of mind, intention, heart, heart's thought, reminiscence² or largeness of soul.³ This second meaning is the best, according to the Qur'an's holistic background. Therefore, in my opinion, the meaning of *Wa aslaha bala-hum* is that God fills believers' hearts with serenity and presence or gives to them largeness of soul.

Contrary to the confidence of faith, its absence brings about distrustfulness, narrowness of soul, and psychological troubles. This is obviously psychological instability. This presence can only be overcome by believing and doing good. The Qur'an says:

What do those who seek after evil ways think that We shall hold them equal with those who believe and do righteous deeds-that equal will be their life and their death? !! is the judgement that they make. (45/21)

Muhammad Asad also says that the reference to the intrinsic difference between these two categories with regard to "*their life and their death*" points not only to the moral quality of their worldly existence but also to inner peace and tranquility – the quality with which a true believer faces life's tribulations and the moment of death and the nagging anxiety that too often accompanies spiritual nihilism, and the "*fear of the unknown*" at the time of dying.⁴ The Qur'an states this in the other verse: "... *He who follows My Guidance will not go astray, and neither will he be unhappy*" (20/122).

How does this presence and serenity occur? What is the reason behind this? I want to give an example with the following verses:

There is no calamity that befalls the earth or your own selves but in accordance with the law (of causation) before We make it evident. This is indeed how the law of God works

¹ Zamakhshari, *ibid.*, 4: 215; Baydawi, *ibid.*, 4: 248.

² Muhammad b. Ya'kub, al-Firuzabadi, *Tartib al-qamus al-muhit, alā tarikat al-misbah al-munir wa asasi al-balaga* (Isa Al-Babi Al-Halabi), 1: 344; Maḥmūd b. 'Abd Allāh, al-Ālūsī, *Ruh al-ma'āni fī at-tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-azīm wa al-sab' al-mathānī* (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, 1987), 28: 38; Ash-Shawkan', Muhammad b. Ali, *Al-fath al-qadir al-jami' fī ar-rivayah wa dirayah min 'ilmi at-tafsīr* (Egypt: Mustafa Al-Babi Al-Halabi, 1964), 5: 30; Penrice B.A., John, *Dictionary and glossary of the Qur'an* (Curzon Press, 1976), p. 20; Al-Isfahani, *Al-Mufradāt*, p. 67.

³ Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ahmad, Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jāmi li-ahkām al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kūtib Al-Ilmiyye, 1988), 16: 149.

⁴ Asad, Muhammad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (England: The Book Foundation, 2003), p. 768.

inevitably. Lest you grieve for what you missed, or rejoice at what you received... (57 / 22-23)

This verse shows us that all events occur according to a plan. Thus, the knowledge that whatever has happened had to happen – and could not have not happened because, obviously, it had been willed by God in accordance with His unfathomable plan – ought to enable a true believer to respond with conscious equanimity to whatever good or ill comes to him.¹ *Zamakhshari* says about this verse of the Qur'an that when one knows that everything exists for the sake of human destiny under God's control, sadness about one's losses, and happiness about one's benefits are decreased. If one knows s/he may lose income, there will not be any unbearable sadness. This is because s/he arranges his/her desires according to this situation. For instance, if one knows some good deeds are reached in any condition, s/he will not be spoiled because of the benefits s/he received.² Thus, the Quran says that

No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah –He will guide his heart... (64 / 11)

Said Nursi says that faith in God bears the seed of what is in effect a Tuba Tree of Paradise, while lack of faith conceals the seed of a Zakkum Tree of Hell.³ The nature of the lack of faith reveals what hell is like. Indeed, just as if the true nature of faith was embodied, it could take on the form of a private paradise with its pleasures and in this respect gives secret news of Paradise, so lack of faith, and especially the absolute lack of faith, dissembling, and apostasy are the cause of such dark and awful pains and spiritual torment that, if they were embodied, they would become a private hell for an apostate, and in this way hint at the greater hell. The tiny truths in the seedbed of this world produce shoots in the hereafter. Thus, this poisonous seed indicates that particular tree of Zaqqum:

I am its origin. For the unfortunate who bears me in his heart, my fruit is a private sample of that Zaqqum-tree.⁴

Some psychiatrists say that the stress people suffer in the last century indeed

¹ See Asad, *ibid.*, p. 840; After the Uhud war the hypocrites of Medina said: "If we had any power of decision, we would not have left so many dead behind." When the Muslims were defeated and 70 of their men had been killed, this verse revealed: "Say (unto them): 'Even if you had remained in your homes, those [of you] whose death had been ordained would indeed have gone forth to the place where they were destined to lie down'" (*Âli Imrân*, 3/154). This implies that all events occur according to a plan.

² *Zamakhshari, ibid.*, 4: 479-80.

³ Said, Nursi, *Sozler* (İstanbul: Sözlür, 2004), p. 43.

⁴ Said, Nursi, *ibid.*, p. 304.

comes from a lack of faith. ¹

“We shall invest whosoever works for good, whether man or woman, with a pleasant life and reward them in accordance with the best of what they have done.” (16/97)

The commentator *Fakhr ad-din ar-Razi* interprets this verse in terms of faith, serenity and presence. He states that the believer believes that his bread comes according to God’s plan, and believes that God is most benevolent and make goodness lonely. Therefore s/he agrees the judgement of God on the subject.

Again, believers think about various disasters and troubles and know those mishaps happen according to the will of God and accept them. They do not overestimate them in their hearts, and their minds are not influenced by them.² *Hasan Al-Basri* says that the meaning of the verse is this: We will make taste of obedience to the obedient.³ This comment, if taken as basic, is understood to mean that there is a beautiful life for believers and those who act in accordance with their faith.

Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya claims that obedience to God in the human heart is the great castle of God keeping individuals safe from the punishments of this world and the next. Those who leave this castle are surrounded by fears. If one obeys God, one can escape these fears and find safety. A rebellious person will experience fear instead of safety. Those who fear God will be confident in everything about the world and those who do not will be afraid of everything. ⁴

Humankind is weak. Their disasters and troubles are many; their needs and loves are unlimited; their lives are very hard. If they do not trust in their God they invite trouble, their hearts remain in torment and those troubles overwhelm them.

¹ For example, Jung says that “Among all my patients in the second half of life—that is to say, over thirty five—there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost what the living religious of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook.” See Jung, C.G., *Psychology and Religion West and East* translated by R.F.C. Hull, (Pantheon Books), p. 334; Robert, Frager, *Heart, Self and Soul / Kalp, nafs wa ruh* (translated into Turkish by Ibrahim Kapaklikaya), (Gelenek Publishing House, 2003), p. 87.

After those experiences, he decided that the religious life is closely related to psychological health. Mystical belief systems were important expressions of human ideals and aspirations. He says, “For me, religious experience is real, is true. I have found that through such religious experiences the soul may be “saved,” its integration hastened, and spiritual equilibrium established” (Frager, *ibid.*, p. 87).

² Fakhr al-Din, al-Razi, *Al-Tafsir al-kabir* (Tahran: Dâr al-Kütub Al-İlm), 7: 268.

³ Abd Ar-Rahim, Muhammad, *Tafshir al-Hasan al-Basri* (Dar al-Hadis), 2:74.

⁴ Ibn Qayyim, Al-Jawziyya, *Al-Jawab al-al-kafi* (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya al-Ulum), pp. 116-17.

As for life, if it is without faith or, because of rebelliousness faith is ineffective, it will produce pains, sorrows and grief far exceeding the superficial, fleeting enjoyment it brings. Because, since, contrary to the animals, man possesses a mind and he thinks, he is connected to both the present time, and to the past and the future. He can obtain both pain and pleasure from them. Whereas, since animals do not think, the sorrows arising from the past and the fears and anxieties arising from the future do not spoil their pleasure in the present. Especially if the pleasure is illicit; then it is like an altogether poisonous honey.

Thousands of griefs afflict humans, drag them into anxiety so that they cannot enjoy anything because humans, unlike animals, possess intelligence and thought. Thus, the human in the present relates to the past and the future. "The fears that come from the past and the future affect his present enjoyments and pleasures and make him anxious and destroy him."¹ This is a true observation. Since reason affects the human's instincts, animals are rather fortunate in enjoying the taste of life more than humans enjoy. Animals do not have logic. Kant says in this context: In a being (man) which has reason and a will, if the proper object of nature was its conservation, its welfare, in a word, its happiness, then nature would have hit upon a very bad arrangement in selecting the reason of the creature to carry out this purpose. For all actions which the creature has to perform with a view to this purpose, and the whole rule of its conduct, would be far more surely prescribed to it by instinct. In fact, we find that the more cultivated reason applies itself with deliberate purpose to the enjoyment of life satisfaction. And from this circumstance there arises in many, if they are candid enough to confess it, a certain degree of mythology, that is, hatred of reason.²

According to the commentator *Said Nursi*, faith gives their owners a higher quality of life. He says:

One who recognises Him (the God) and obeys Him is fortunate even if he is in prison. While one who forgets Him is wretched and a prisoner even if he resides in a palace."³ Al-Qardawi too says something similar: "Believing in God gives *sakina* (calmness) and it turned a hut to a palace but, for those deprived of *sakina*, a palace is turned to a hut."⁴

For this reason, living according to faith is a source of beauty. So the Qur'an says:

¹ See Nursî, *Sözler*, p. 131; Said, Nursi, *The Words* (translated by. Sukran Vahide), (İstanbul: Sozler, 2004), p. 158.

² Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals* (translated by. T.K. Abbott), (Prometheus Books, 1988), p. 19.

³ Nursî, *Sözler*, p. 145.

⁴ Al-Qardawi, Yusuf, *Al-Iman wa al-hayat*, p.75.

But for him who lived in awe of sublimit of his Lord, there will be two gardens. (55/46)

According to some commentators, these two gardens are destined respectively for men and *jinn*. According to some, for each believer, one is for their bodily pleasures and the other for their spiritual pleasures and delights.

In some interpreters' opinions, however, one of the two gardens is the life of a Muslim who is alive in this world in this verse. According to this, the life of a Muslim has a paradisiacal feeling in this world.¹ For this reason, *Ibn Taymiyah* says that, in fact, the blessing and taste, joy and mature could only be achieved by recognizing Allah and loving Him. According to him, real happiness would be possible only by being close to Allah and meeting Him. This is paradise on earth. Whoever does not enter this first paradise (that exists in this world) cannot enter the second one (the hereafter).²

Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya states about this verse – “The pious will surely be in heaven, the wicked certainly in hell” (*Al-Infitar*, 82/13-14) – says: Do not suppose that the verse belongs to the next world (the hereafter). In reality, these persons in three phases (*Dunya*, *Berzah* and next world) are under God's blessing and the others are in hell. Which tastes and blessings are better than happiness of heart, peace of soul, grasping the existence of God, loving Him and acceptance of God's will, human destiny and living according to these (Tabaraka and Taala)? In fact, the art of living is peace of mind, is it not? For this reason, God has presented Hz. Abraham as an ideal believer of God because of his character which was typified by peace of mind in the Qur'an.³ “And Abraham indeed was of his inducement, when he came to his Lord with a heart compliant” (37/83-84).

Prophet Muhammad (p.u.h.) said: “There is a piece of flesh inside man's body. When it is purified, the whole body remains impure. That piece is the heart (*qalb*).”⁴ This *hadith* shows us that when the inner world of the human being is peaceful and not worried this condition spreads over the entire body.

¹ Abu Al-Qasim Abd al-karim, Al- Qushayri, *Tafshir al-Kushayri* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyya), 3: 269; Muhammad Hamdi, Yazir, *ibid.*, p. 275.

² Al-Jawziyya, Ibn Qayyim, *Tibb Al-Qulub* (Jidde: 1983), p. 53.

³ Al-Jawziyya, Ibn Qayyim, *Ad-Dâ'u wa Ad-Dawâu* (Damascus: Dar al-Qalem, 2001), p. 165; Al-Jawziyya, Ibn Qayyim, *Al-Jawabu Al-Kafi li man saala an dawâi As-shafi* (Beirut: Dar Al-Ihyâi Ulûm, 1990), pp. 116 -117.

⁴ Bukhari, *Iman*, 39; Muslim, *Musâkat*, 107; Ibn Maca, *Fitan*, 14; Darimi, *Buyu'*, 1; Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, 4: 55.

Here the most profound influence of religion, in the heart of humans, is an evocation of happiness. Saïd Nursi says:

If the light of thought is not illuminated with the light of the heart and blended with it, it is darkness and breeds tyranny. If the white of the eye, which resembles day, was not together with its black pupil, which resembles night, the eye would not be the eye; it would be unseeing. Similarly, if the black core of the heart is not present in white thought, it lacks insight.¹

This situation brings about intrinsic faith, introduces calm and peace in the heart. Nevertheless, İbrahim b. Ethem says, "If kings and sultans knew this psychological beauty surrounding us, they would absolutely wage war by their swords to get this kind of mood."² So when Prophet Muhammad (p.u.h.) wrote a letter to Heraclius he included the crucial statement:

Feinnî ad'uke bidiyeti'l-Islam. Aslim taslim (I invite you to be Muslim. Be Muslim, find peace of mind).³

It is understood that the darkness of the heart is the source of spiritual distress, while belief is its elixir.

1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, humans are the weakest beings organically. Additionally, life entails many burdens, afflictions, and troubles. If people do not take refuge, in *iman's* castle these troubles, burdens and afflictions, will mislead them and prevent them from taking pleasure in their possessions. However, faith is a good shield here.

¹ Saïd, Nursi, *Mektubat / Letters* (translation by: Sukran Vahide), (Sozler, 2001), p. 443.

² Al-Jawziyya, Ibn Qayyim, *Al-Jawabu Al-Kafi li Man Saala an Dawâi As-Shafi* (Beirut: Dar Al-Ihyâi Ulûm, 1990).p. 117; Kamil, Umar Abdullah, *At-Tasavvuf beyna al-ifrat wa at-tafrit* (Beirut: 2001), p. 63; Al-Qardawî, Yusuf, *Al-Iman wa al-hayat*, p. 73; al-Qardawî, Yusuf, *Al-Hasâisu al-amma li al-Islam* (Maktabatu Vahba, 1989), p. 23.

³ Tabari, Abu Ja'fer Muhammad b. Jerir, *The History of al-Tabarî / Târih al-umam wa al-mülûk* (Beirut, 1407), 1: 130; Muhammad, Hamidullah, *Al-Vesaiku As-Siyasiyye* (Beirut: Dar al-Nefâis, 1985), p. 109; Muhammad, Hamidullah, *The prophet of Islam* (translated into Turkish by Salih Tuğ), 4th ed. (İstanbul: İrfan, 1980), 1: 361.

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