



Bahai feast programs, Bahai feasts, Bahai feast devotions, Bahai writings, Bahai prayers

Test & Difficulties

The mystery of test & difficulties



O Thou Whose tests are a healing medicine to such as are nigh unto Thee, Whose sword is the ardent desire of all them that love Thee, Whose dart is the dearest wish of those hearts that yearn after Thee, Whose decree is the sole hope of them that have recognized Thy truth! I implore Thee, by Thy divine sweetness and by the splendors of the glory of Thy face, to send down upon us from Thy retreats on high that which will enable us to draw nigh unto Thee. Set, then, our feet firm, O my God, in Thy Cause, and enlighten our hearts with the effulgence of Thy knowledge, and illumine our breasts with the brightness of Thy names.

– Bahá'u'lláh

Thou knowest full well, O my God, that tribulations have showered upon me from all directions and that no one can dispel or transmute them except Thee. I know of a certainty, by virtue of my love for Thee, that Thou wilt never cause tribulations to befall any soul unless Thou desirest to exalt his station in Thy celestial Paradise and to buttress his heart in this earthy life with the bulwark of Thine all-compelling power, that it may not become included toward the vanities of this world. Indeed Thou art well aware that under all conditions I would cherish the remembrance of Thee far more than the ownership of all that is in the heavens and on the earth.

Strengthen my heart, O my God, in Thine obedience and in Thy love, and grant that I may be clear of the entire company of Thine adversaries. Verily, I swear by Thy glory that I yearn for naught besides Thyself, nor do I desire anything except Thy mercy, nor am I apprehensive of aught save Thy justice. I beg Thee to forgive me as well as those whom Thou lovest, howsoever Thou pleasest. Verily, Thou are the Almighty, the Bountiful.

Immensely exalted are Thou, O Lord of the heavens and earth, above the praise of all men, and may peace be upon Thy faithful servants and glory be unto God, the Lord of all the worlds.

– The Báb

How do tests and sorrows lead to perfection?

And, finally, 'Abdu'l-Bahá completes this theme by saying with deep sympathy, "The more difficulties one sees in the world the more perfect one becomes. The more you plough and dig the ground the more fertile it becomes. The more you cut the branches of a tree the higher and stronger it grows. The more you put the gold in the fire the purer it becomes. The more you sharpen the steel by grinding, the better it cuts. Therefore, the more sorrows one sees the more perfect one becomes. That is why, in all times, the Prophets of God have had tribulations and difficulties to withstand. The more often the captain of a ship is in the tempest and difficult sailing the greater his knowledge becomes.

Therefore, I am happy that you have had great tribulations and difficulties. For this I am very happy – that you have had many sorrows. Strange it is that I love you and still I am happy that you have sorrows."

– 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Why do we experience hardship in this world?

'Abdu'l-Bahá starts by saying, "O thou servant of God! Do not grieve at the afflictions and calamities that have befallen thee. All calamities and afflictions have been created for man so that he may spurn this mortal world – a world to which he is much attached. When he experienceth severe trials and hardships, then his nature will recoil and he will desire the eternal realm – a realm which is sanctified from all afflictions and calamities. Such is the case with the man who is wise. He shall never drink from a cup which is at the end distasteful, but, on the contrary, he will seek the cup of pure and limpid water. He will not taste of the honey that is mixed with poison.

Praise thou God, that thou hast been tried and hast experienced such a test. Be patient and grateful. Turn thy face to the divine Kingdom and strive that thou mayest acquire merciful characteristics, mayest become illumined and acquire the attributes of the Kingdom and of the Lord. Endeavour to become indifferent to the pleasures of this world and to its comfort, to remain firm and steadfast in the Covenant and to promulgate the Cause of God.

This is the cause of the exaltation of man, the cause of his glory and of his salvation."

– 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Is there meaning to all suffering?

“In the spiritual development of man a stage of purgation is indispensable, for it is while passing through it that the over-rated material needs are made to appear in their proper light. Unless society learns to attribute more importance to spiritual matters, it would never be fit to enter the golden era foretold by Bahá’u’lláh.”

“The present calamities are parts of this process of purgation, through them alone will man learn his lesson. They are to teach the nations, that they have to view things internationally, they are to make the individual attribute more importance to his moral, that his material welfare.”

“The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering. The more the ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, and the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furrows the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment. His attitude in this world will be that of divine happiness. Man is, so to speak, unripe: the heat of the fire of suffering will mature him. Look back to the times past and you will find that the greatest men have suffered most.”

– `Abdu'l-Bahá

How should we face tests?

“Unless the season of winter appear, thunder roll, lightning flash, snow and rain fall, hail and frost descend and the intensity of cold execute its command, the season of the soul-refreshing spring would not come, the fragrant breeze would not waft, the moderation of temperature would not be realized, the roses and hyacinths would not grow, the surface of the earth would not become a delectable paradise, the trees would not bloom, neither would they bring forth fruits and leaves. That fierce inclemency of cold, snow, frost and tempest was the beginning of the manifestation of these roses, hyacinths, buds, blossoms and fruits.”

“Therefore, be not distressed on account of those adversities which fell upon thee; nay, rather, arise and render thanks that the ultimate goal is the attainment to this eminent bounty and the enjoyment of this highest gift of the Almighty God. Consequently gird up the loins of thine endeavour, that thereby some results might be produced, some fruits gathered, the lamp of everlasting life ignited and the gifts of the Lord of the Kingdom be manifest, so that thou mayest accomplish again, with great yearning and exaltation, the worship of the Lord of Hosts.”

– `Abdu'l-Bahá

Why do we keep facing the same tests and difficulties?

“The more one is severed from the world, from desires, from human affairs, and conditions, the more impervious does one become to the tests of God. Tests are a means by which a soul is measured as to its fitness, and proven out by its own acts. God knows its fitness beforehand, and also its unpreparedness, but man, with an ego, would not believe himself unfit unless proof were given him.”

“Consequently his susceptibility to evil is proven to him when he falls into the tests, and the tests are continued until the soul realizes its own unfitness, then remorse and regret tend to root out the weakness.”

“The same test comes again in greater degree, until it is shown that a former weakness has become a strength, and the power to overcome evil has been established.”

– `Abdu'l-Bahá

God alone ordereth all things and is all-powerful. Why then does He send trials to His servants?

“The trials of man are of two kinds: First, the consequences of his own actions. If a man eats too much, he ruins his digestion; if he takes poison he becomes ill or dies. If a person gambles he will lose his money; if he drinks too much he will lose his equilibrium. All these sufferings are caused by the man himself, it is quite clear therefore that certain sorrows are the result of our own deeds.

And second, other sufferings there are, which come upon the Faithful of God. Consider the great sorrows endured by Christ and by His apostles! Those who suffer most, attain to the greatest perfection. Tests are benefits from God, for which we should thank Him. Grief and sorrow do not come to us by chance, they are sent to us by the Divine Mercy for our own perfecting.

While a man is happy he may forget his God; but when grief comes and sorrows overwhelm him, then will he remember his Father who is in Heaven, and who is able to deliver him from his humiliations. Men who suffer not, attain no perfection. The plant most pruned by the gardeners is that one which, when the summer comes, will have the most beautiful blossoms and the most abundant fruit. ”

– `Abdu'l-Bahá

Music

What should our attitude be when facing tests?

“To the sincere ones, tests are as a gift from God, the Exalted, for a heroic person hasteneth, with the utmost joy and gladness, to the tests of a violent battlefield, but the coward is afraid and trembles and utters moaning and lamentation. Likewise, an expert student prepareth and memorizeth his lessons and exercises with the utmost effort, and in the day of examination he appeareth with infinite joy before the master. Likewise, the pure gold shineth radiantly in the fire of test.

Consequently, it is made clear that for holy souls, trials are as the gift of God, the Exalted; but for weak souls they are an unexpected calamity. This test is just as thou hast written: it removeth the rust of egotism from the mirror of the heart until the Sun of Truth may shine therein. For, no veil is greater than egotism and no matter how thin that covering may be, yet it will finally veil man entirely and prevent him from receiving a portion from the eternal bounty.”

– `Abdu'l-Bahá