



*Means of Steadfastness:
Standing Firm in Islaam*

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Contents

- Introduction
- Means of Steadfastness in Islaam
- Situations where steadfastness is required
- Conclusion

Introduction:

Praise be to Allaah; we praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allaah from the evil of our own selves and from our evil deeds. Whomsoever Allaah guides cannot be led astray, and whomsoever He leaves astray cannot be guided. I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Allaah alone, with no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, is His slave and Messenger.

Steadfastness in the religion of Allaah The Almighty is a basic requirement for every sincere Muslim who wants to follow the Straight Path with determination and understanding. This matter is of great importance for a number of reasons, including the following:

1. The present situation of the societies in which Muslims live, the types of temptation to which they are painfully exposed and the kinds of whims and desires, doubts and confusion which have caused religion to become something strange, so that those who adhere to it are likened to something weird, and people say: *"The one who holds on to his religion is like one who holds on to a burning coal."* Anyone who has a thinking brain will not doubt that Muslims today need the means of steadfastness more than their predecessors among the *Salaf* (righteous predecessors) did, and that the effort required is greater, because of the corruption of our times, and the scarcity and weakness of brothers and supporters who could help.
2. The high incidence of apostasy (*Riddah*) and backsliding, even among those who are working for Islaam, which causes Muslims to fear ending up the same way, so he seeks the means of standing firm so that he can reach dry land, as it were.
3. The relationship of this issue to the heart, of which the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **"It changes more than a pot of rapidly boiling water."** (Reported by Ahmad, 6/4; Al-Haakim, 2/289; *as-Silsilah as-Saheehah*, 1772) The Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, also struck another example of the heart: **"The heart [Qalb] takes its name from its constant changes [Taqaallub – alteration, variation, ups and downs]. The likeness of the heart is that of a feather at the root of a tree, being turned over and over by the wind."** (Reported by Ahmad, 4/408; *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 2364)

As a contemporary poet said: “He is only called *Insaan* (man) because of his *Nisyaan* (forgetfulness); And it is only called *al-Qalb* (the heart) because it constantly varies (*Yataqallab*).”

Making the one stand firm who is tossed about by the winds of doubt and confusion is a serious matter which needs tremendous means as befits the seriousness and difficulty of the task at hand.

It is part of Allaah’s mercy towards us that He has shown to us, in His Book and through the words and life of His Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, many ways of being steadfast in Islaam. I will discuss some of them below.

Means of Steadfastness in Islaam:

- Turning towards the Qur’aan:

The Qur’aan is the foremost aid to standing firm in Islaam. It is the strong rope and clear light of Allaah The Almighty. Allaah The Almighty will protect whoever adheres to it, save whoever follows it, and cause whoever calls to its way to be guided to the Straight Path.

Allaah The Almighty has stated that the reason why this Book was revealed in stages was to help His Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, to stand firm in his faith. In the context of refuting the doubts of the *Kuffaar* (disbelievers), He Says (what means): ***{And those who disbelieve say: ‘Why is not the Qur’aan revealed to him all at once?’ Thus [it is sent down in parts], that We may strengthen your heart thereby. And We have revealed it to you gradually, in stages. And no example to similitude do they bring [to oppose or to find fault in you or in this Qur’aan], but We reveal to you the truth [against that similitude or example], and the better explanation thereof.}*** [Qur’aan 25:32-33]

Why is the Qur’aan such a source of strength?

1. Because it cultivates faith and purifies the soul through contact with Allaah The Almighty.
2. Because these *Aayaat* (verses) bring peace and tranquility to the heart of the believer, so he will not be tossed about by the winds of *Fitnah* (trial, temptation); his heart will be content with the remembrance of Allaah The Almighty.
3. Because it provides the Muslim with the correct understanding and values with which he will be able to evaluate the situation around him. It also gives him the standards against which he may judge things in a proper and consistent manner, without varying from one situation or person to another.
4. Because it refutes the doubts that are stirred up by the enemies of Islaam, *Kuffaar* and *Munaafiqeen* (hypocrites) alike, as in the following examples from the early days of Islaam:

The effect of the *Aayah* (which means): ***{Your Lord (O Muhammad) has neither forsaken you nor hated you}*** [Qur’aan 93:3] on the heart of the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, when the polytheists said: “Muhammad has been forsaken...” (See *Saheeh Muslim bi Sharh an-Nawawi*, 12/156)

The effect of the *Aayah* (which means): ***{... The tongue of the man they refer to is foreign, while this (the Qur’aan) is a clear Arabic tongue}*** [Qur’aan16:103] The Quraysh claimed that Muhammad, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*, was taught by a human being and that he took the Qur’aan from a Roman carpenter in Makkah.

The effect of the *Aayah* (which means): **{...Surely they have fallen into trial [Fitnah]...}** [Qur'aan 9:49] on the hearts of the believers, when the hypocrite had said (what means): **{Grant me leave (to be exempted from Jihaad) and put me not into trial.}** [Qur'aan 9:49]

Is it not the greatest of help, strengthening the heart of the believer, refuting doubts and silencing the voices of falsehood? Indeed it is, by Allaah.

When the believers were coming back from al-Hudaybiyyah, Allaah The Almighty promised them much war booty which they alone would go and take (i.e., the booty of Khaybar). [He told them that] the Hypocrites would ask to accompany them, but the Muslims would say: "You shall not follow us." They would persist in trying to change the words of Allaah, and they would say to the believers: "Nay, you envy us," to which Allaah The Almighty responded by Saying (what means): **{Nay, but they understand not except a little.}** [Qur'aan, 48:15] Then all of this happened to the believers, step by step, word by word.

From this we can see the difference between those whose lives are connected to the Qur'aan, who read it, recite it, memorize it, study it, ponder its meanings and take it as their starting-point and their refuge, and those who are preoccupied with the words of man.

Would that those who seek knowledge would devote most of their efforts to understanding the Qur'aan properly!

- Adhering to the laws of Allaah The Almighty and doing righteous deeds:

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): **{Allaah will keep firm those who believe, with the word that stands firm in this world and in the Hereafter. And Allaah will cause to go astray those who are Dhaalimoon [polytheists and wrong-doers, etc.], and Allaah does what He wills.}** [Qur'aan 14:27]

Qataadah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "As for the life of this world, Allaah will help them to be steadfast in doing good and righteous deeds, and in the Hereafter (He will help them) to remain steadfast in the grave." A similar interpretation was narrated from more than one of the *Salaf*. (*Tafseer al-Qur'aan al-'Adheem* by Ibn Katheer, 3/421)

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): **{... but if they had done what they were told, it would have been better for them, and would have strengthened their [Faith]}** [Qur'aan 4:66], i.e., it would have strengthened them in their adherence to the Truth.

This is clear, for how can you expect steadfastness on the part of those who are too lazy to do righteous deeds, when *Fitnah* rears its ugly head and calamity strikes? Rather, Allaah The Almighty will guide those who believe and do righteous deeds by their faith to the Straight Path. This is why the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used to persevere in doing righteous deeds, and the most beloved of good deeds to him were those that were continuous, even if they were small. When his Companions started to do anything, they would persist in it, and when the Mother of the Believers 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, did something, she would keep it up.

The Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used to say: **"Whoever perseveres in performing twelve Rak'ahs [units of prayer; i.e., the Sunan Rawaatib or Sunnah prayers which the Prophet of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, performed constantly], Paradise will be his right."** (*Sunan*

At-Tirmithi, 2/273; he said that the *Hadeeth* is *Hasan* (sound) or *Saheeh* (authentic); see also *Saheeh an-Nasaa'i*, 1/388 and *Saheeh At-Tirmithi*, 1/131)

According to a *Hadeeth Qudsi*, Allaah The Almighty Says: **“My slave will keep drawing near to me with *Naafil* (supererogatory) acts of worship until I love him.”** (Reported by Al-Bukhaari; see *Fat-h al-Baari*, 11/340)

- Studying the stories of the prophets, may Allaah exalt their mention, and following their example

The *Daleel* (evidence) for this is the *Aayah* (which means): *{And all that We relate to you [O Muhammad] of the news of the Messengers is in order that We may make strong and firm your heart thereby. And in this has come to you the truth, as well as an admonition and a reminder for the believers.}* [Qur'aan 11:120]

These *Aayaat* were not revealed at the time of the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, for the purpose of mere entertainment and amusement. They were revealed for an important purpose, which was to strengthen the heart of the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and likewise the hearts of the believers.

Think about the meaning of the *Aayah* (which means): *{They said: 'Burn him [Ibraaheem, or Abraham, may Allaah exalt his mention] and help your Aalihah [gods], if you will be doing.' We [Allaah] said: 'O fire! Be you coolness and safety for Ibraaheem!' And they wanted to harm him, but We made them the worst losers.}* [Qur'aan 21:68-70] Ibn 'Abbaas, may Allaah be pleased with him, said: *“The last thing Ibraaheem, may Allaah exalt his mention, said when he was thrown in the fire was: 'Allaah is Sufficient for me and He is the Best Disposer of affairs.’”* (*Al-Fat-h*, 8/22) Do you not feel how he stood firm in the face of oppression and torture, when you read this story?

Think about the *Aayah* in which Allaah The Almighty tells us about Moosa (Moses, may Allaah exalt his mention), in the verse (which means): *{And when the two hosts saw each other, the companions of Moosa said: 'We are sure to be overtaken.' Moosa said: 'Nay, verily! With me is my Lord, He will guide me.'}* [Qur'aan 26:61-62] Do you not feel how he stood firm when he was being pursued by the hosts of Pharaoh and was surrounded by cries of despair from his own people?

Read the story of the magicians of Pharaoh, which is an example of a small group that adhered firmly to the truth once it had become apparent to them. Do you not see how they stood firm in the face of threats issued by the oppressor who said (what means): *{Believe you in him (Moosa) before I give you permission? Verily! He is your chief who taught you magic. So I will surely cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will surely crucify you on the trunks of date-palms, and you shall surely know which of us [I (Pharaoh) or the Lord of Moosa] can give the severe and more lasting torment.}* [Qur'aan 20:71] The small group of believers stood firm, with no thought of retreat, and said (what means): *{We prefer you not over the clear signs that have come to us, and to Him Who created us. So decree whatever you desire to decree, for you can only decree [regarding] the life of this world.}* [Qur'aan 20:72]

Also think about the story of the believer in *Soorat Yaa-Seen*, the believer of Pharaoh's household, the People of the Ditch (*As-haab al-Ukhdoon*), and others, which teach us the greatest lessons we could ever learn about standing firm in our faith.

- *Du'aa'* (supplication):

One of the characteristics of the believing slaves of Allaah The Almighty is that they turn to Him with *Du'aa'*, asking Him to help them to stand firm: **{Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate [from the truth] after You have guided us...}** [Qur'aan 3:8]; **{Our Lord! Pour out constancy [patience] on us and make our steps firm...}** [Qur'aan 2:250]

The Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, told us that: **"The hearts of the sons of Aadam are as one between the fingers of the Most Merciful, and He directs them as He wills."** (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him, from Ibn 'Umar, may Allaah be pleased with him; see *Saheeh Muslim bi Sharh an-Nawawi*, 16/204) The Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, often used to say: **"O Controller of the hearts, make my heart adhere firmly to Your religion."** (Reported by At-Tirmithi, may Allaah have mercy on him, from Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him. *Tuhfat al-Ahwathi*, 6/349; *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 7864)

- *Thikr* (remembrance of Allaah):

This is one of the greatest means of remaining steadfast on Islaam.

Think about the combination described in this *Aayah* (which means): **{O you who believe! When you meet [an enemy] force, take a firm stand against them and remember the Name of Allaah much, so that you may be successful.}** [Qur'aan 8:45] *Thikr* is one of the most effective aids to standing firm in *Jihaad*.

"Think about how the physical strength of the Persians and the Romans let them down when they needed it most," said Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, in *Ad-Daa' wa ad-Dawaa'* – despite the small numbers of men and weapons of those who remembered the Name of Allaah much.

How did Yoosuf (Joseph, may Allaah exalt his mention) stand firm in the face of temptation of the part of the powerful and beautiful woman who called him to do wrong? Did he not enter the fortress of "seeking refuge in Allaah" and thus defeat the waves of temptation? This is the power of *Athkaar* in making the believers steadfast.

- Striving to follow the correct way

The only correct way, which every Muslim must follow, is the way of *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa'ah*, the path of the victorious group and the saved sect, the people of pure '*Aqeedah* (basic tenets of faith) and sound methodology, the followers of the *Sunnah* (Prophetic tradition) and the (sound) evidence. The Muslim must be distinguish himself from the enemies of Allaah and be different from the people of falsehood.

If you want to know the value of this in standing firm, then ask yourself: why have so many people, in the past and nowadays, been led astray? Why have they become confused? Why have their feet not stood firm on the Straight Path? Why did they not die following it, or why did they come to it so late in life, after wasting so much precious time?

So you see them, moving from one kind of misguided *Bid'ah* (religious innovation) to another, from philosophy to '*Ilm al-Kalaam* (what is known as Islaamic philosophy), from *Mu'tazili* thought to the

way of twisting and misinterpreting the clear *Aayaat* of the Qur'aan, from one *Soofi Tareeqah* to another...

Thus are the people of *Bid'ah*, confused, unstable and insecure in their faith. See how the people of *'Ilm al-Kalaam* are deprived of steadfastness at the time of death. Hence the *Salaf* said: "*The people who suffer the most doubt at the time of death are the people of al-Kalaam.*" But think about it: has any follower of *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa'ah* ever turned his back on this way in discontent after he has come to know and understand it? People may abandon it because of their whims and desires, or because of doubts if their understanding is weak, but no one has left because he saw something more correct or because he thought this way was wrong.

The proof of this is to be seen in the questions posed by Heraclius to Abu Sufyaan about the followers of Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*. He asked: "*Has anyone ever left this religion out of discontent after entering it?*" Abu Sufyaan said: "*No.*" Then Heraclius said: "*This is how it is when the joy of faith fills the heart.*" (Reported by Al-Bukhaari, *al-Fat-h*, 1/32)

We have heard a lot about great leaders who moved from one kind of *Bid'ah* to another, and others whom Allaah The Almighty guided and so they left falsehood behind and joined the *Math-hab* of *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa'ah*, despising their former ways. But do we ever hear about the opposite?

If you want to stand firm in your Islaam, then you must follow the way of the believers.

- Training and education:

Gradual, conscious training in faith, based on knowledge, is one of the basic factors in standing firm in Islaam.

Training in faith is that which fills the heart and consciousness with fear, hope and love (of Allaah), as opposed to the dryness which results from ignoring the texts of the Qur'aan and *Sunnah* and devoting too much attention to the words of men.

Training based on knowledge is that which is based on *Saheeh* evidence, as opposed to mere imitation and blind following.

Conscious training is that which recognizes the way of the sinners and wrongdoers, studies the plots of the enemies of Islaam and properly understands and evaluates reality and events, as opposed to a blinkered worldview and narrow horizons.

Gradual training is that which takes the Muslim step by step towards achieving perfection with proper planning, as opposed to spontaneous and hasty progress in fits and starts.

In order to understand the importance of this element in standing firm, let us go back to the *Seerah* (biography) of the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, and ask ourselves:

1. What was the source of the Companions' steadfastness in Makkah, at the time of their persecution?
2. How could Bilaal, Khabbaab, Mus'ab, the family of Yaasir and other dispossessed Muslims, may Allaah be pleased with them all, stand firm? How could even the greatest of the Companions stand firm when they were boycotted by others?

3. Is it possible that they could have stood firm without extensive training under the supervision of the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, which had honed and refined their personalities?
4. Take, for example, the Companion Khabbaab ibn al-Aratt, may Allaah be pleased with him, whose owner used to heat an iron skewer until it was red-hot, then place it on his bare back where it would burn until it was extinguished by the fat of his back flowing over it. What enabled him to bear all that with patience and perseverance? Think of Bilaal, may Allaah be pleased with him, beneath the rock on the burning sands, and Sumayyah, may Allaah be pleased with her, in chains and fetters...
5. Look at the period in Madeenah: we may ask, who was it who stood firm with the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, at Hunayn when most of the Muslims had fled the battlefield? Was it the new reverts who had become Muslim at the Conquest of Makkah, and who had not yet received sufficient training at the hands of the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, most of whom had gone out only in search of booty? No – most of those who stood firm were the crème de la crème of the believers, who had already received that great training.
6. If they had not received such training, would they have stood firm?
 - Having confidence in the path that you are following:

No doubt the more confident the Muslim is of the path he is following, the more steadfast he will be in adhering to it. There are many ways of achieving this, including the following:

1. Feeling that the way which you are following is not something new that started in this century, but that it is an ancient and venerable way which the prophets, speakers of truth, scholars, martyrs and righteous people have followed before you. This will reduce your feelings of loneliness and replace your alienation with a sense of comfort, and your sadness will turn to joy because you will feel that all these people are your brothers in this way and methodology.
2. Feeling that you are among the chosen. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means):
 - *{...Praise and thanks be to Allaah, and peace be on His slaves whom He has chosen (for His Message)!...}* [Qur'aan 27:59]
 - *{Then We gave the Book (the Qur'aan) for inheritance to such of Our slaves as We chose...}* [Qur'aan 35:32]
 - *{Thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of dreams (and other things)...}* [Qur'aan12:6] Therefore, just as Allaah The Almighty has chosen the prophets, so the righteous have a share in this being chosen, which is that they have inherited the knowledge of the prophets.
3. Asking yourself: how would you feel if Allaah The Almighty had created you inanimate, or a dumb beast, or an atheist disbeliever, or one who calls to *Bid'ah*, or an immoral wrongdoer, or a Muslim who does not call others to Islaam, or one who calls to a way that is filled with error? Do you not see that this feeling of having been chosen by Allaah The Almighty and been made one of those who call to the way of *Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamaa'ah* is one of the factors which will keep you steadfast on your methodology and on this path?
 - *Da'wah* (calling others to Allaah):

The soul that is not active will stagnate. One of the most important fields in which one can be active is the field of *Da'wah*, calling others to Allaah The Almighty. This is the work of the prophets, work which will save you from punishment, help you to realize your potential and enable you to achieve great things. **{Now then, for that (reason), call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast as you are commanded...}** [Qur'aan 42:15] It is not true to say that someone is neither making progress nor slipping back (for if you are not making progress, you are certainly falling back – no one is static). If a person is not occupied in acts of worship and obedience, he will be busy with sin and disobedience, and faith can wax and wane – it does not remain constant.

Calling to the correct methodology – by devoting time to it, making mental and physical efforts, and speaking out, so that *Da'wah* becomes the main concern of the Muslim – will block the Shaytaan's efforts to tempt him and lead him astray.

In addition to that, being challenged by obstacles and stubborn people on the journey of *Da'wah* will make the *Daa'iyah* (caller to Allaah) stronger in faith.

Besides bringing a great reward, *Da'wah* is also a means of being steadfast in one's faith and protecting oneself from backsliding, because the one who is attacking does not need to defend himself, and Allaah The Almighty is with the *Daa'iyahs*, making them stand firm. The *Daa'iyah* is like a doctor fighting illness with his experience and knowledge: by fighting the illness in others he will be the least likely to suffer it himself.

- Keeping close to people who will help make you steadfast:

These are people whose characteristics the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, referred to in the *Hadeeth*: **“Among the people are some who open the way to goodness and close the way to evil.”** (*Hasan*; reported by Ibn Maajah, may Allaah have mercy on him, from Anas, may Allaah be pleased with him, 237, and by Ibn Abu 'Aasim, may Allaah have mercy on him, in *Kitaab as-Sunnah*, 1/127. See also *As-Silsilah as-Saheehah*, 1332) Looking for scholars, righteous people and believing *Daa'iyahs*, and keeping close to them, is a great help in remaining steadfast. When times of trial arose in Islaamic history, Allaah The Almighty helped the Muslims to stand firm with the help of certain individuals.

For example, 'Ali ibn al-Madeeni, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *“Allaah supported His Religion with as-Siddeeq [Abu Bakr, may Allaah be pleased with him] at the time of the Riddah (apostasy), and with Ahmad [ibn Hanbal, may Allaah have mercy on him] at the time of the test.”*

Think about what Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allaah have mercy on him, said about the role of his *Shaykh*, Shaykh al-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, in helping the Muslims to stand firm:

“When our fear became too great and we began to think the worst and things got too difficult for us, we would come to him. We only had to see him and hear his words, and all that would go away, to be replaced by tranquility, strength, assurance and calm. Glory be to the One Who made His slaves witness Paradise before their meeting with Him, opened its door to them in this world and caused them to feel its fragrant breezes so that they would devote all their energy to seeking it and competing for it.”
(*Al-Waabil as-Sayyib*, p. 97)

Here Islaamic brotherhood emerges as a basic source of steadfastness. Your righteous brothers, leaders and teachers are a source of help for you on the path, a strong pillar on which you can lean. They can make you more steadfast through the *Aayaat* they know and the wisdom they possess...Stick with them and live among them; do not be alone, so that the *Shayaateen* (devils) may not overwhelm you; for the sheep that the wolf eats is the one that wanders away from the flock.

- Being confident of the help of Allaah, and that the future belongs to Islaam:

We need to stand firm even more when victory is delayed, so that we will not go astray after being steadfast. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): *{And many a Prophet fought [in Allaah's Cause] and along with him [fought] large bands of religious learned men. But they never lost heart for that which did befall them in Allaah's Way, nor did they weaken nor degrade themselves. And Allaah loves as-Saabireen [the patient ones]. And they said nothing but: 'Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and our transgressions [in keeping our duties to You], establish our feet firmly, and give us victory over the disbelieving folk.' So Allaah gave them the reward of this world, and the excellent reward of the Hereafter...}* [Qur'aan 3:146-148]

When the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, wanted to compose his persecuted Companions and make them steadfast, he told them, in times of persecution and tests, that the future belonged to Islaam. What did he say? Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy on him, reported from Khabbaab, may Allaah be pleased with him, that he said: **"Allaah will certainly complete this matter (i.e., Islaam), until a traveler will be able to go from San'aa' to Hadhramawt fearing nothing except Allaah and the wolf that may attack his sheep."** (Reported by Al-Bukhaari; see *Fat-h al-Baari*, 7/165)

Telling the young generation about the narrations that give good news of the future belonging to Islaam is an important part of their education and training to remain firm upon their religion.

- Understanding the reality of falsehood and not being misled by it:

Allaah The Almighty tells us (what means): *{Let not the free disposal [and affluence] of the disbelievers throughout the land deceive you.}* [Qur'aan 3:196] This offers reassurance to the believers and helps them to stand firm.

Allaah The Almighty also tells us (what means): *{... Then, as for the foam, it passes away as scum upon the banks...}* [Qur'aan 13:17] This is a lesson for those who have intelligence not to fear falsehood, nor submit to it.

The Qur'aan also exposes the aims and means of the people of falsehood, as Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): *{And thus do We explain the Aayaat (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) in detail, that the way of the Mujrimoon (criminals, polytheists, sinners) may become manifest}* [Qur'aan 6:55] – so that the Muslims will not be caught unawares and so that they will know from which direction Islaam will be attacked.

How often have we heard about and seen movements collapsing and *Daai'yahs* losing their steadfastness because of attacks which they did not expect due to their ignorance of their enemies!

- Acquiring the characteristics that will help one to remain steadfast:

The most important of these is *Sabr* (patience). Al-Bukhaari and Muslim, may Allaah have mercy on them both, report that the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **"No one is given any gift greater and more bountiful than patience."** (Reported by Al-Bukhaari in *Kitaab az-Zakaah, Baab al-Isti'faaf 'an al-Mas'alah*; and by Muslim in *Kitaab az-Zakaah, Baab Fadhl al-Ta'affuf wa as-Sabr*) The greatest patience comes at the onset of a disaster, and if something unexpected befalls a man, the disaster will overwhelm him and he will lose his steadfastness, if he does not have patience.

Think about what Ibn al-Jawzi, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *"I saw an old man, nearly eighty years old, who always used to come to Jamaa'ah (congregation) prayers. A son of his daughter died, and he said: 'No one should pray to Allaah anymore, because He does not respond.' Then he said: 'Allaah is stubborn and does not leave us a son.'"* (*Ath-Thabaat 'ind al-Mawt* by Ibn al-Jawzi, p. 34) Exalted be Allaah far above what he said!

When the Muslims were defeated at Uhud, this disaster was quite unexpected, because Allaah The Almighty had promised them victory; but Allaah The Almighty taught them a hard lesson through the blood of the martyrs. *[[What is the matter with you?] When a single disaster smites you, although you smote (your enemies) with one twice as great, you say: 'From where does this come to us?' Say [to them], 'It is from yourselves [because of your evil deeds].'...]* [Qur'aan 3:165] How could they have been the cause of it? Because: *{... you lost your courage and fell to disputing about the order, and disobeyed after He showed you (of the booty) which you love. Among you are some that desire this world...}* [Qur'aan 3:152]

- The advice of righteous men:

When the Muslim is faced with trials and his Lord tests him in order to purify him, one of the means which Allaah The Almighty gives him to help him stand firm is a righteous man who will advise and help him. Through this man's words Allaah helps the believer to stand firm and directs his steps. These words remind him of Allaah, the Meeting with Him, His Paradise and His Hell. There follow some examples from the life of Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him, who entered the test and emerged as pure gold.

He was taken to Caliph al-Ma'moon in chains, and al-Ma'moon had already issued him such a stern warning before he reached him that a servant said to Imaam Ahmad: *"It hurts me, O Abu 'Abdullaah, that al-Ma'moon has unsheathed a sword which he has never unsheathed before, and he swears by his relationship to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, that if you do not accept what he says about the Qur'aan being created, he will certainly kill you with that sword."* (*Al-Bidaayah wa an-Nihaayah*, 1/332)

At this point, the intelligent scholars took the opportunity to say to their Imaam words that would help him to remain steadfast. In *As-Siyar* (11/238), Ath-Thahabi reports from Abu Ja'far al-Anbaari, may Allaah have mercy on them:

"When Ahmad was taken to al-Ma'moon, I was told about it, so I crossed the Euphrates and found him sitting in an inn, where I greeted him. He said: 'O Abu Ja'far, why did you go to the trouble (of coming here)?' I said: 'Listen to me, today you are the leader and the people are following you. By Allaah, if you accept that the Qur'aan is created, a lot of people will go along with that, but if you do not, then neither will they. Even if this man (al-Ma'moon) does not kill you, you will still die, because death is inevitable, so fear Allaah, and do not go along with (al-Ma'moon).' Ahmad began to weep and said: 'Maa shaa'

Allaah.’ Then he said: ‘O Abu Ja’far, say it again,’ so I said it again, and he kept saying: ‘Maa shaa Allaah.’...”

With regard to his being taken to al-Ma’moon, Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *“We reached al-Rahbah at midnight, and a man came to us and said: ‘Which of you is Ahmad ibn Hanbal?’ He was told: ‘This man.’ He said to the camel-driver: ‘Slow down.’ ... Then he said: ‘Listen to me, why should you worry if you get killed here and go to Paradise?’ Then he said: ‘May Allaah be with you,’ and left. I asked about him and I was told: ‘He is an Arab from the tribe of Rabee’ah who deals with wool in the desert. He is called Jaabir ibn ‘Aamir, and they say good things about him.’”* (Siyar A’laam an-Nubala’, 11/241)

In *al-Bidaayah wa an-Nihaayah*, it says that a Bedouin said to Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him: *“Listen to me, you are a representative of the people, so do not be bad news for them. You are the leader of the people today, so beware of doing what they are asking you to do, lest you bear their sins on the Day of Resurrection. If you love Allaah, then bear this with patience, for the only thing standing between you and Paradise is your being killed.”* Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *“His words strengthened my resolve not to do what they were asking me to do.”* (Al-Bidaayah wa an-Nihaayah, 1/332)

It was reported that Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *“I never heard any stronger words at that time than what a Bedouin said to me at Rahbat Tawq, a village between ar-Raqqah and Baghdaad on the banks of the Euphrates. He said: ‘O Ahmad, if they kill you for the truth, you will be a Shaheed (martyr), and if you live, you will be praised.’ And so my heart grew strong.”* (Siyar A’laam an-Nubala’, 11/241)

Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him, said of the young man Muhammad ibn Nooh, who accompanied him at that time of trial: *“Even though he was so young, he had such great knowledge, and I never saw anyone who adhered more firmly to the command of Allaah than Muhammad ibn Nooh, and I hope that his end was good. He said to me one day: ‘O Abu ‘Abdullaah, you are not like me. You are a man whom people follow, and they are straining their necks to see what you will do, so fear Allaah and adhere to His commands.’ Then he died, and I prayed the Janaazah (funeral) prayer for him and buried him.”* (Siyar A’laam an-Nubala’, 11/242)

Even his fellow-prisoners, whom Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him, used to lead in prayer in chains, had a role to play in helping him to stand firm. One day when he was in prison, Imaam Ahmad, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: *“I don’t care about being in prison – it is no different from my home – or about being killed by the sword, but I am afraid of the trial of being whipped.”* One of the other prisoners heard him and said: *“Don’t worry, O Abu ‘Abdullaah; it is only two lashes of the whip, then you don’t feel where the rest fall.”* It was as if this reassured him and calmed him down. (Siyar A’laam an-Nubala’, 11/240)

So try to seek advice from righteous people, and try to understand it if it is given to you.

Seek their advice before you travel, if you think that something could happen to you. Seek their advice when you are facing some trial, or before some test that you expect to face. Seek their advice if you are appointed to a position of authority or if you inherit some wealth.

Make yourself stand firm, and help others to do so too. Allaah is the Protector of the believers.

- Thinking about the delights of Paradise and the punishments of Hellfire, and remembering death:

Paradise is the abode of joy, the consolation of those who grieve, the final destination of the believers. The soul is by nature not inclined to make sacrifices or work hard or stand firm unless it gets something in return that makes difficulties easy and helps it to overcome the obstacles in its way.

The one who knows about the reward will find it easy to work hard, because he will be aware that if he does not remain steadfast, he will miss out on Paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth. The soul needs something to lift it above the dust of this earth and raise it to the heavenly world.

The Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used the mention of Paradise to encourage his Companions, may Allaah be pleased with them, to stand firm. According to a *Hasan Saheeh Hadeeth*, the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, passed by Yaasir, 'Ammar and Umm 'Ammar, may Allaah be pleased with them all, when they were being tortured for the sake of Allaah and said: **"Patience, family of Yaasir, patience, family of Yaasir, for your destination is Paradise."** (Reported by Al-Haakim, 3/383; it is a *Hasan Saheeh Hadeeth*. See *Fiqh as-Seerah*, ed. Al-Albaani, p. 103)

The Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, used to tell the *Anssar* (Helpers): **"You will face selfish people after my death, so have patience until you meet me at the *Hawdh* [cistern – on the Day of Judgment]."** (Al-Bukhaari and Muslim)

Similarly, one should think about the situation of both groups (believers and disbelievers) in the grave, the gathering, the reckoning, the scales of justice, the *Siraat* (bridge over Hell), and the other events of the Hereafter.

Remembering death protects the Muslim from backsliding and helps him to adhere to the limits set by Allaah, so that he does not transgress them. If he knows that death is closer to him than his own shoelaces and that his time could come at any moment, how can he let himself slip or persevere in deviation? Hence the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **"Always remember the destroyer of pleasure."** (Reported by At-Tirmithi, 2/50; classed as *Saheeh* in *Irwaa' al-Ghaleel*, 3/145)

Situations where steadfastness is required:

There are many such situations, which need to be discussed in detail, but we can only list them in brief here.

Times of trial and tribulation:

Trials and tribulations can cause the heart to change. Whether they are the trials of ease or of hardship, only those who have understanding and whose hearts are filled with faith can remain steadfast.

Among the different types of trials are:

1. The trial of wealth. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{And of them are some who made a covenant with Allaah [saying]: 'If He bestowed on us of His Bounty, we will verily give charity and will be certainly among those who are righteous. Then when He gave them of His Bounty, they became niggardly, and turned away, averse.}*** [Qur'aan 9:75-76]
2. The trial of worldly power and authority. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{And keep yourself patiently with those who call on their Lord morning and afternoon, seeking His Face, and let not your eyes overlook them, desiring the pomp and glitter of the life of the world; and***

obey not him whose heart We have made heedless of Our Remembrance, one who follows his own lusts and whose affair (deeds) has been lost.] [Qur'aan 18:28]

Concerning the danger of these two types of trial, the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **"Two hungry wolves sent against the sheep could not do more damage to them than the damage done by a man's eagerness for wealth and power to his religion."** (Reported by Imaam Ahmad in *al-Musnad*, 3/460; see also *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 5496) The meaning is that a man's desire for wealth and power will do more damage to his religion than the damage done by two hungry wolves to a flock of sheep.

3. The trial of one's wife. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): *{... Verily, among your wives and your children there are enemies for you (i.e., may stop you from the obedience of Allaah), therefore beware of them!...}* [Qur'aan 64:14]
4. The trial of children. The Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **"Children are the cause of cowardice, the cause of stinginess and the cause of grief."** (Reported by Abu Ya'laa, 2/305 – it also has corroborating reports. See also *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 7037)
5. The trial of persecution, oppression and injustice. Allaah The Almighty has described this in the most evocative terms in the Qur'aan, in the verse (which means): *{Cursed were the people of the ditch, Fire supplied [abundantly] with fuel, When they sat by it [the fire], And they witnessed what they were doing against the believers [i.e., burning them]. They had nothing against them, except that they believed in Allaah, the All-Mighty, Worthy of all Praise! To Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth! And Allaah is Witness over everything.}* [Qur'aan 85:4-9]

Al-Bukhaari, may Allaah have mercy on him, reported from Khabbaab, may Allaah be pleased with him, who said:

"We complained to the Messenger of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, when he was reclining on his cloak in the shade of the Ka'bah. He, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **'Among the people who came before you, there was a man who was taken and put into a hole dug for him in the earth, then a saw was put on his head and he was cut into two pieces, and an iron comb was used to tear the flesh from his bones, but this still did not turn him away from his religion.'**" (Reported by Al-Bukhaari, see *Fat-h al-Baari*, 12/315)

6. The trial of the *Dajjaal* ("Antichrist"), which is the greatest trial in this world. The Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **"O people, there has never been any *Fitnah* on the face of the earth since Allaah created Adam greater than the trial of the *Dajjaal*... O slaves of Allaah, O people, stand firm, for I shall describe him to you in a way that no prophet before me has described him..."** (Reported by Ibn Maajah, 2/1359; see *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 7752)

Conclusion:

With regard to the heart and the trials it is subjected to, the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, said: **"Hearts are exposed to trials one after the other. Any heart that succumbs to them is stained with a black spot, and any heart that resists them becomes pure white, until all hearts of one of these two types. The white heart is intensely white and will not be harmed by any trial so long as heaven and earth remain, and the black heart is intensely black and does not recognize good or forbid evil, except what suits its own whims and desires."** (Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 5/386, and by Muslim, 1/128 – this version narrated by Muslim)

Steadfastness in *Jihaad*:

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): **{*O you who believe! When you meet [an enemy] force, take a firm stand against them...*}** [Qur'aan 8:45] One of the major sins (*Kabaa'ir*) in our religion is running away from the battlefield. When the Prophet of Allaah, *sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, was carrying earth on his back when they were digging the trench (*al-Khandaq*), he repeated with the believers: **"Make us steadfast when we meet our enemies."** (Reported by Al-Bukhaari in *Kitaab al-Ghazawaat*, *Bab Ghazwat al-Khandaq*. See *al-Fat-h*, 7/399)

Steadfast adherence to the *Manhaj* (methodology of the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*):

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): **{*Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allaah [i.e., they have gone out for *Jihaad*, and showed not their backs to the disbelievers], of them some have fulfilled their obligations [i.e., have been martyred], and some of them are still waiting, but they have never changed [i.e., they never proved treacherous to their covenant which they concluded with Allaah] in the least.*}** [Qur'aan 33:23] Their principles are dearer to them than their own souls, and their determination knows no compromise.

Steadfastness at the time of death:

The *Kuffaar* and immoral people are denied steadfastness at the most difficult and most stressful times, and they cannot utter the *Shahaadah* (testimony of faith) at the time of death – which is one of the signs of a bad end. A man was told when he was dying to say *La ilaaha illallaah*, and he started to move his head from right to left, refusing to say it. Another, a businessman, started to say: *"This is an excellent piece, this is a bargain,"* when he was dying. A third began to mention the names of various

chess pieces, and a fourth started to hum the tunes of songs, or to mention the name of someone he loved. This is because those things distracted them from remembering Allaah in this world.

You may see some of these people with blackened faces, or a foul odor, or turning away from the Qiblah – *La Hawla wa la Quwwata illa Billaah* (there is no strength or power except with Allaah).

But the people of righteousness, who follow the *Sunnah*, are helped by Allaah The Almighty to stand firm at the time of death, and so they utter the *Shahaadatayn* (the two testimonies of faith). You may see some of them with a cheerful face and a pleasant scent, looking as if they are hearing good news when their souls are taken from their bodies.

This is an example of one of those whom Allaah The Almighty helped to be steadfast at the time of death. His name was Abu Zar'ah ar-Raazi, one of the *Imaams* of the scholars of *Hadeeth*:

“Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn ‘Ali Warraaq Abu Zar’ah said: we were with Abu Zar’ah in Shahaan, one of the villages of ar-Riyy, when he started dying, and Abu Haatim, Ibn Waarah, al-Munthir ibn Shaadhaan and others were with him. They remembered the Hadeeth: ‘Tell those who are dying to say Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah,’ but they felt too shy to tell Abu Zar’ah to say it. They said: ‘Let us mention the Hadeeth.’ Ibn Waarah said: ‘Abu ‘Aasim told us: ‘Abdul-Hameed ibn Ja’far told us, from Saalih,’ and he started to say ‘Ibn Abi...’ but he could not go any further. Then Abu Haatim said: ‘Bundaar told us Abu ‘Aasim told us, from ‘Abdul-Hameed ibn Ja’far, from Saalih...’ but he could not go any further, and the rest remained silent. Then Abu Zar’ah said, whilst he was dying, he opened his eyes and said: ‘Bundaar told us, Abu ‘Aasim told us, ‘Abdul-Hameed told us, from Saalih ibn Abi Ghareeb from Katheer ibn Murrâh from Mu’aath ibn Jabal who said: ‘The Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, said: ‘Whoever says as his last words La ilaaha ill-Allaah, will enter Paradise.’ Then his soul departed, may Allaah have mercy on him.” (Siyar A’laam an-Nubalaa’, 13/76-85)

These are the ones of whom Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{Verily, those who say: ‘Our Lord is Allaah [alone],’ and then they stood straight (followed Islaam truly), on them the angels will descend (at the time of their death) [saying]: ‘Fear not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of Paradise which you have been promised!} [Qur’aan 41:30]***

O Allaah, make us among them. O Allaah, we ask you to make us adhere to Islaam with determination and wisdom. And the end of our prayer is: praise be to Allaah, Lord of the Worlds.