

Grasping a Burning Coal Sr. Fatima Sallam

Yes, we live in a time of *fitnah*. But what does *fitnah* actually mean? It literally translates to ‘trials and tribulations’ but linguistically, the word comes to mean ‘burning a metal to purify it’. The *fitnah* in our lives, and us dealing righteously with it, will purify us.

Let’s move on to another word. *Ikhlas*. The word itself means ‘sincerity’ though the linguistic meaning translates into ‘getting the best out of everything’. The concepts of *ikhlas* and *fitnah* are interconnected.

We have to go through *fitnah* to attain *ikhlas*.

And going through *fitnah* we are. In today’s age, we are constantly surrounded by things that distract us from our faith. But, we must have patience. Allah is Al ‘Adl or the Just. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*) said that “the people who hold onto the religion and do good deeds during these times of trial will receive the reward of 50 among not just any of us, but the *sahaba*.”

SubhanAllah!

Now, we must learn to identify this *fitnah*. Sometimes, it is obvious. Maybe you lost your job, or maybe your loved one is very sick. Other times, it’s rather subtle and the only person aware of this difficulty can be you. For example, you may be having trouble doing *salah* on time or you may be having trouble keeping your hijab on. But we must be steadfast in our actions.

Abdullah bin Amr bin Al Aas narrated: The Prophet said to me, "You fast daily all the year and pray every night all the night?" I replied in the affirmative. The Prophet said, "If you keep on doing this, your eyes will become weak and your body will get tired. He who fasts all the year is as he who did not fast at all. The fasting of three days (a month) will be equal to the tasting of the whole year." I replied, "I have the power for more than this." The Prophet said, "Then fast like the fasting of David who used to fast on alternate days and would never flee from the battle field on meeting the enemy."

We must not be excess and wear ourselves out. In fact, the best ibadah is small and consistent. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*) said “the most beloved deed to Allah is the most regular and constant even if it were little.”

In fact, one of the *sahabas* once said that “A good deed I can do today is better than doing the same good deed twice with Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*). This is because at the time of Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*), all we thought about was the *akhirah* and now that he isn’t here, the *dunya* has caught up to us and it’s hard to continue doing those good deeds.

Today, we integrate our culture into the Islam we follow. We judge halal and haram based on our culture and history. This is another *fitnah*. We must follow the true Islam regardless of culture. The change must come from within us. It is impossible to try and create a 100% halal environment. It’s out of

our control. However, what we need to do is to find something to go back to that will recharge our environment. But the question is how?

1. Halaqahs: We come to this halaqah with insha'Allah, the right intentions and we learn more about Islam. The greater our *ilm*, the more we'll know Allah and the better our *deen* will be. Remember, the first thing revealed to Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*) was *Iqra!* Read!

How much do we know about Islam? Do we even know the *tafseer* of the Surah Fatiha that we read numerous times a day? Do we even feel the Surah as we read it? How much do we know about our *salah*? Or on perfecting *wudu*? *Ilm* is fundamental to good *emaan*.

Let us learn to read the Quran with *tajweed*. Let us learn more about our beloved Prophet Muhammad (*sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*) by reading his *seerah*. He was the best of role models after all. We should keep *ilm* goals just like we have goals to study well or get that promotion. Let us ask ourselves, "Do we really know Allah and His beautiful names and attributes? Do we feel true love for Him?"

2. Ibadah: Our *ibadah* is a sign on our level of *emaan*. Islam is proactive. You have to work hard to rise to higher levels of *deen*. Do we read the Quran daily? Or even a page a week? Do we know and repeat our *Adhkar*? How can we expect to change and grow if we don't even ask Allah to help us fight our *fitnah*? Ask Him for help!
3. Our friends: Who are our friends? Do they help us get close to Allah? Okay, they are Muslims but are they true Muslims? Do they help increase your *emaan*? We sometimes try so hard to fit in that we end up doing things that are harmful to our *emaan*.

Ibn Hibban has narrated in his *saheeh*: "Whoever seeks Allah's Pleasure at the expense of men's displeasure, will win Allah's Pleasure and Allah will cause men to be pleased with him. And whoever seeks to please men at the expense of Allah's Displeasure, will win the Displeasure of Allah and Allah will cause men to be displeased with him."

We should compare ourselves with where we want to be in our relationship with Allah. Not with society's expectations of us. We live in a time where *fitnah* is everywhere and where holding onto our *deen* is like holding on to burning coal. Things are going against us everywhere but we must turn this difficulty around. We must use it to attain the higher reward and have *sabr*.

In the end, we ask Allah to guide us firm onto this *deen* and to make us sincere in our *emaan*. Ameen