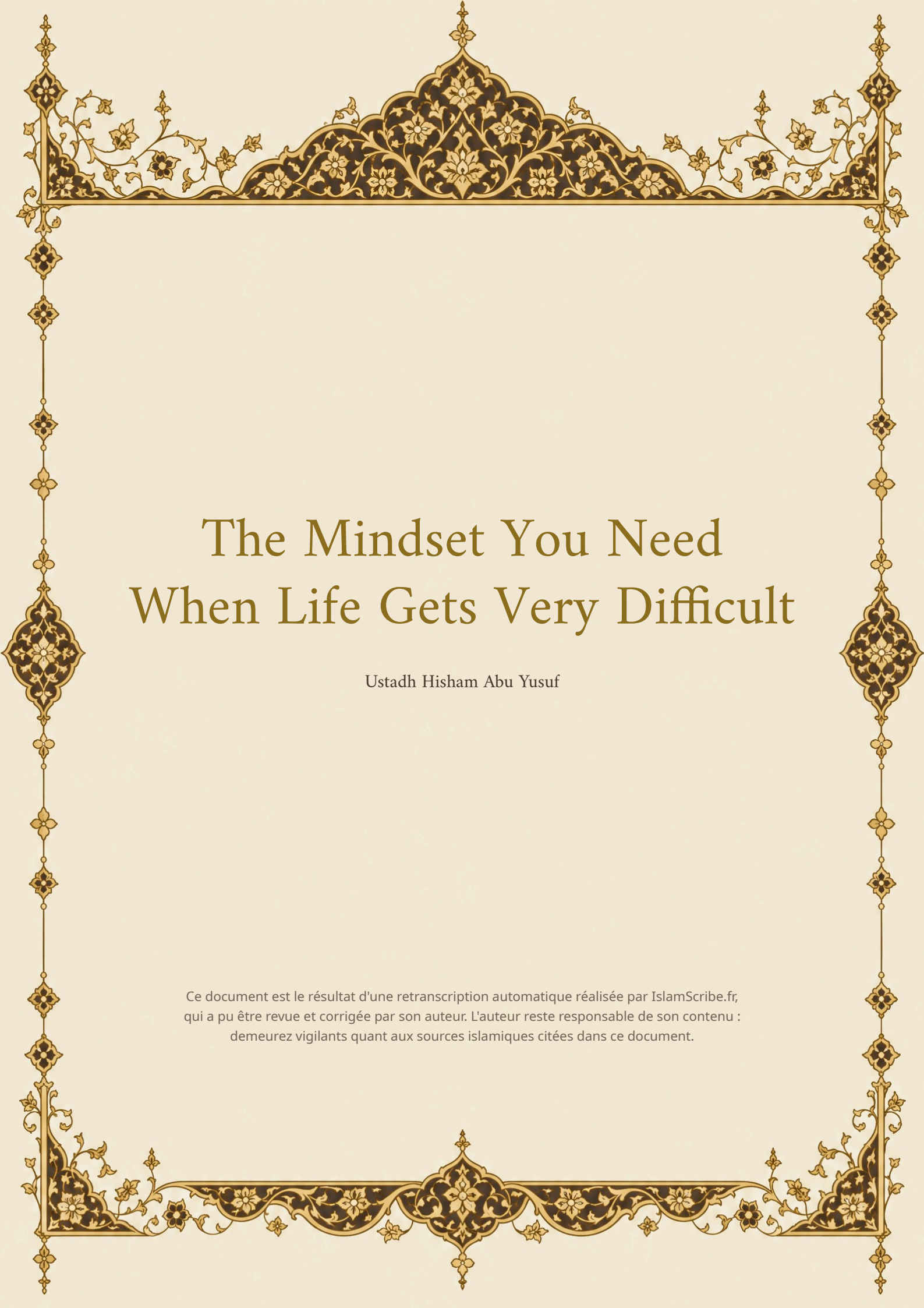




The Mindset You Need When Life Gets Very Difficult

Ustadh Hisham Abu Yusuf

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1. Trials Reveal the Level of Faith

﴿مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ
فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا - (33:23) يَنْتَظِرُ﴾¹

¹ ﴿٢٣﴾ Allah ﷻ says, “Of the believers are men who are true to that which

they covenanted with Allah.”¹ (33:23) ﴿صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ﴾¹ (33:23) They proved their sincerity and the genuineness of their الْإِيمَانُ (īmān : faith). Because الْإِيمَانُ (īmān : faith) is something—just as in karate you have belts, and just as in knowledge you have exams—الْإِيمَانُ (īmān : faith) has exams that prove your level. Who are you, and what level is your الْإِيمَانُ (īmān : faith)? You’re not going to know on a good day; you’re going to know when everything goes wrong. Today is the day your الْإِيمَانُ (īmān : faith) is going to be exposed. In غَزْوَةِ الْأَحْزَابِ (Ghazwat al-Aḥzāb : Battle of the Trench), Allah ﷻ is describing in سُورَةِ الْأَحْزَابِ (Sūrat al-Aḥzāb : Surah al-Ahzab) the same situation, experienced completely differently by two groups of people. The الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (al-mu’minūn : believers), the people who have الْإِيمَانُ (īmān : faith), experienced this situation completely differently. Physically, mentally, and spiritually—their emotions, their thoughts, their skin, everything—was different only because they have الْإِيمَانُ (īmān : faith). And those who don’t have الْإِيمَانُ (īmān : faith), or who are faking it, experienced this situation completely differently. This is important for those who try to divorce الْإِيمَانُ (īmān : faith)—to remove it and say it’s unrelated to their mental or physical health, emotions, or intelligence. All of this is one interconnected piece.

1. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 23

2. The Battle of the Trench

a. The Allied Forces Approaching Medina

Let's set the context first. The Prophet ﷺ hears that 10,000 people from Makkah are marching toward Medina. But there's something different about this battle compared with all the previous battles. What's different? Does anybody know? What's different about the enemy facing the believers? It's not only Quraysh. Who is it this time? It's multiple groups. Multiple tribes have teamed up, okay? Not just one group. So now you have a number and a set of groups you've never seen before, with more wealth, more backing, more resources, more strategy, and more military power than you've ever seen before.

b. Digging and Defending the Trench

The second thing is: how did the Muslims decide to deal with this situation? Their leader, Muhammad ﷺ, decided on the advice of his companions. He chose the advice of سَلْمَانَ الْفَارِسِيُّ: to dig a trench. Okay, around—is it the whole of Medina, guys? Which part of Medina? Three parts of Medina are covered by mountain ranges. Who can tell me what the mountains are? Which side? Does anybody know anything about Medina's geography? جَبَلُ أُحُدٍ is not just one mountain, by the way; Uhud is a mountain range. It covers a whole part of Medina. Then you have other mountains surrounding Medina. Mountain ranges cover every part of Medina except one part, one vulnerable quarter. Imagine a square like this, with only one part of the square vacant. There is a mountain here called جَبَلُ سَلْعٍ. It's a small mountain here. But this is the part where they need to dig a big hole so that they never penetrate this part of Medina. Does anybody know the dimensions of the trench? How deep, how wide, how long? Any idea? Any estimates? Guess? We're talking about a trench whose length is roughly between 5 and 10 meters, okay? Its depth is the depth of three men. Hmm? Eighteen feet, okay. And its length is roughly—roughly 1.5 to 2 kilometers long. This is a construction project, and there was no fundraising for it. Who built it? Who built the trench? Everyone.



2. THE BATTLE OF THE TRENCH

Well, they paid a salary for it. They had to volunteer their time. How long did it take to build the trench? It took them two to three months just to dig. Just to dig. The Prophet ﷺ—if you, insha'Allah, go to جَبَلُ سَلْعٍ one day and climb to the top, there's a small masjid there, about the size of this square over here. مَسْجِدُ الْفَتْحِ. The Prophet ﷺ went there, set up posts, and stayed there. He stayed there for months, and he would pray salah in this exact location. مَسْجِدُ الْفَتْحِ. Now, can you imagine all of this?



c. The Strain of Preparing for Battle

For months and months, everyone has been volunteering their time to dig in the scorching heat. They have other jobs, other ways to earn a living, and other lives to lead. Their wives and children are at home, suffering without the men. The men are there in the heat, digging and digging and digging. This is a long job, not a short one. And they know the kuffar of Quraysh are coming with all these groups they have never seen before. All of this is important context for understanding what is about to happen.

3. Fear During the Siege

a. Attacks Across the Trench

So now, Allah ﷻ described the situation:

إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ
وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونًا²

When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when eyes grew wild and hearts reached to the throats, and ye were imagining vain thoughts concerning Allah ﷻ—

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10 (partial)

“When they came upon you from above you”² (33:10)—their arrows. Imagine arrows raining down from above. Each time arrows rain down from above—imagine 1,000 arrows—the shields have to go up. ² (33:10) — “and from below you”² (33:10). They tried to cross the trench. They tried to go around it. They sent arrows over it. They tried to jump across the trench on their horses. Have you ever seen horse-jumping competitions? Go home and watch some horse-jumping videos. A horse can jump a good length, but they couldn't jump the length of the trench.

b. The Thoughts and Physical Signs of Fear

Now, how does Allah ﷻ describe the situation? Notice:

إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ
وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونًا³

3. FEAR DURING THE SIEGE

When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when eyes grew wild and hearts reached to the throats, and ye were imagining vain thoughts concerning Allah ﴿١٠﴾—

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10 (partial)

“when eyes grew wild”³ (33:10)

إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ
وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا⁴

When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when eyes grew wild and hearts reached to the throats, and ye were imagining vain thoughts concerning Allah ﴿١٠﴾—

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10 (partial)

“hearts reached to the throats”⁴ (33:10) You know, when you're swallowing something very thick out of fear.

إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ
وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا⁵

When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when eyes grew wild and hearts reached to the throats, and ye were imagining vain thoughts concerning Allah ﴿١٠﴾—

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10 (partial)

“and ye were imagining vain thoughts concerning Allah ﴿١٠﴾”⁵ (33:10) Now, let's break it down. You're thinking wild thoughts, your heart reaches your throat, and your eyes are trembling. Thinking? This is something in the mind, right? Your thoughts. Your heart reaches your throat—this is something physical, a symptom, right? This is a physical thing you can measure, taste, and feel. And your eyes are trembling—this is a physical symptom. Correct. And how would you describe someone when you look at them, their eyes are trembling, they're gulping, and they're imagining? The mind is going in crazy directions. What would you describe this—what is this emotion? Panic. Panic attack. Sorry? Panic attack. Panic attack. Might as well use some clinical terms as well. مَسَاكِينُ. What else? Intense fear. إِنْتَاجُ. Intense



3. FEAR DURING THE SIEGE

fear. ^قح. Horror. What do you think is the most common term for such a thing today in the world, when something very difficult happens to someone? What do they call it? They call it trauma. Who heard this name, trauma? Put your hand up. Trauma. Okay.

2. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10
3. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10
4. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10
5. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10



4. Understanding Hardship as Trauma or a Test

Now, let's talk about what Allah ﷻ calls this situation. هُنَالِكَ ابْتِلَاءٌ — Allah ﷻ calls it ابْتِلَاءٌ (ibtīlā' : trial). In the modern world, they call it trauma. Let's compare the two.

a. The Meaning of Trauma

Until the 18th century, what was the word “trauma” used for in English? It referred to being physically smashed in the head by someone. They called this blunt trauma, يَعْني a physical wound. This was the usage up until the 1800s.

After World War I and World War II, people who came back were not the same as the people who had left. What did they call this? Post-traumatic stress disorder. Something external had happened to this person, something very difficult for them to bear, and now they were not the same person. This external thing is called trauma.

You have to protect people from trauma. Trauma is bad; it is something that can hurt you. It is like being smashed, being hurt. It is like a wound. You can't recover from it. You can't heal from it easily.

So they started using the word for physical injury. They started using it for a very scary event, a very difficult event—almost as though to say that if something really bad happens to you, you are now permanently injured, like someone who came back from war, and you need something very big in order to recover from this.

b. A Test That Refines Faith

What does Allah ﷻ call this incident? ابْتِلَاءٌ (ibtīlā' : test). What is ابْتِلَاءٌ (ibtīlā' : test) in Arabic? بَلَاءٌ (balā' : test): to test, to examine, to see what something is made of, to open something, and to check what is under the surface. This is what بَلَاءٌ (balā' : test) يَبْلُو (yablū : tests) means. ابْتِلَاءٌ (ibtīlā' : testing) يُبْتَلَى (yubtalī : examines): to really examine and

4. UNDERSTANDING HARDSHIP AS TRAUMA OR A TEST

scrutinize something until you see what it is made of; to melt something until the impurities fade and you are left with only the pure substance. This is **إِبْتِلَاءٌ** (ibtīlā' : testing). Allah ﷻ describes this scary, terrifying, physically shaking incident of **أَحْزَابٍ** (ahzāb : confederates). He describes it as a purifying occasion: **إِبْتِلَاءٌ** (ibtīlā' : testing), something that purifies, refines them, and polishes them. And what do people in the modern world call it? Trauma: something that damages, injures, hurts, scars, and is not reversible.

c. Giving Things the Right Names

Giving things the right names is a core part of our deen. It is very important. If you give something the wrong name, you have a completely wrong idea about it. You see, Allah ﷻ said in the Quran:

﴿وَعَلَّمَ ءَادَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ
أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾⁶

And He taught Adam all the names, then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform Me of the names of these, if ye are truthful ﴿٣١﴾ — Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

Surah Al-Baqara (2): verse 31 (partial)

He taught Adam the correct names, how to name things properly. And when somebody used to call Zayd ibn Muhammad, Allah ﷻ revealed:

﴿أَدْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا ءَابَاءَهُمْ
فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ
بِهِ وَلَكِنْ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا﴾⁷

Proclaim their real parentage. That will be more equitable in the sight of Allah. And if ye know not their fathers, then (they are) your brethren in the faith, and your clients. And there is no sin for you in the mistakes that ye make unintentionally, but what your hearts purpose (that will be a sin for you). Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful ﴿٥﴾ — Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the

Glorious Koran (1930)

Call him by his real name. What is his real name? Zayd ibn whom? **حَارِثَةَ** وَيْحُ —not Zayd ibn Muhammad. Don't use the wrong name; it messes up the whole concept.

d. Faith Shaken by a Severe Test

This incident shook them. Allah ﷻ calls it: **﴿هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾**⁸ (33:11) — “There were the believers sorely tried,”⁸ (33:11). They were cleansed and refined. **﴿وَزُلْزِلُوا﴾**⁸ (33:11) — “and shaken”⁸ (33:11), **﴿زَلْزَلًا شَدِيدًا﴾**⁸ (33:11) — “with a mighty shock **﴿١١﴾**”⁸ (33:11).

Was there an earthquake? A physical earthquake? So what earthquake was this, then? If it wasn't a physical earthquake, what shook? The **إِيمَان** (imān : faith) shook. Can **إِيمَان** (imān : faith) shake? Yes. **إِيمَان** (imān : faith) can wobble. It can wobble like someone standing on a tightrope, about to fall and struggling to stay on. You have to fight to stay on the tightrope. You know, when people think of **صِرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيم** (Ṣirāṭ al-mustaḳīm : the straight path), they think of a road. Don't think of a road. Think of a rope. You're trying to walk on this rope with a stick, trying to balance. And **وَزُلْزِلُوا** means you're shaking; a wind blows, you're about to fall off, and you're fighting to get back on. This is what happened in this incident. Allah ﷻ calls it **إِبْتِلَاءٌ** (ibtillā' : a trial). Modern clinicians call everything trauma. Everything. Anything bad happens—your father did something to you, your sister did something to you, your **قَادَكَ كُلُّ**. Everything is trauma. Through this theory that everything is trauma, and that you must be protected from trauma, with trauma therapy, they created a very fragile generation, terrified of any type of difficulty. Allah ﷻ calls it **إِبْتِلَاءٌ** (ibtillā' : a trial). It's a purifying opportunity, and a believer embraces it. A believer never runs from **إِبْتِلَاءٌ** (ibtillā' : a trial).



4. UNDERSTANDING HARDSHIP AS TRAUMA OR A TEST

6. Quran - Surah Al-Baqara (2): verse 31
7. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 5
8. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 11



5. Two Responses to the Fear of Struggle

Now Allah ﷻ describes the reactions of two groups of people. What is the reaction of people of iman? What is the reaction of people with no iman? Watch.

a. The Doubts of the Hypocrites

وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ۚ⁹

And when the hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is a disease, were saying: Allah and His messenger promised us naught but delusion ﴿١٢﴾ — Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious

Koran (1930)

Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 12

When people with no iman saw this situation—arrows raining down from above, armies gathering from all sides—you know what it feels like to be stuck in one place for two months? Claustrophobic. You feel, “Where will I run?” When they felt afraid, overwhelmed, and terrified, the people who had no iman said, “Allah ﷻ lied to us. Guys, this whole iman thing was a lie.” Allah ﷻ promised us victory. Look what He gave us. Terrifying. Fear and doubt. Everything Allah ﷻ and His messenger ﷺ promised us was a lie. This is how people with no iman respond. By the way, both groups are feeling the same symptoms: the same fear, the same trembling eyes, the same feeling that the heart is in the throat. They’re both experiencing it. What’s the difference between the two? Are the people of iman somehow immune? Do they not feel any fear? No, they feel fear. What’s the difference? It’s how they respond to fear, how they respond to the situation. The people of نفاق, when they saw the situation, said, “Allah ﷻ lied to us, guys. The whole thing is a sham. We’re finished. We’re eaten alive.”

b. The Believers Recognize the Promised Struggle

But what happened when the believers saw this situation? Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ
وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا﴾¹⁰

And when the true believers saw the clans, they said: This is that which Allah and His messenger promised us. Allah and His messenger are true. It did but confirm them in their

faith and resignation ﴿﴾ — Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 22

When the people of الْإِيمَان (al-īmān : faith) saw this, they felt this fear. What did they say? They said, “Guys, this is exactly what Allah ﷻ promised us.” One second. What’s the mindset here? One group is saying, “Guys, everything Allah ﷻ promised us is a lie.” The مُؤْمِنِينَ (mu’minīn : believers) are saying, “Guys, everything Allah ﷻ promised us is true.” What’s going on? Why are they saying two opposite things? “Everything Allah ﷻ promised us is a lie.” “Everything Allah ﷻ promised us is true.” Are they wearing different glasses? One went to Specsavers; one didn’t go to Specsavers. When the الْمُنَافِقُونَ (al-munāfiqūn : hypocrites)—people with no الْإِيمَان (al-īmān : faith)—say, “Allah ﷻ lied to us,” what are they referring to? What’s the lie? What promise did Allah ﷻ not fulfill? What is it? Victory? They’re saying Allah ﷻ promised us victory. Look. Look, we’re going to be defeated. When the believers see the situation, they say, “Allah ﷻ promised us, and He’s true.” What promise are they referring to? What comes before victory, guys? الْإِبْتِلَاءُ (al-ibtilā’ : struggle). The الْمُنَافِقُونَ (al-munāfiqūn : hypocrites) are saying, “Allah ﷻ promised us victory.” Look, it’s a lie. The believers are saying, “Allah ﷻ promised struggle.” Look, it’s true. The same incident, the same fear, the same physical symptoms. Only one difference: الْإِيمَان (al-īmān : faith) makes you see everything completely differently, and كُفْرٌ (kufr : disbelief) makes you see everything completely differently. They say, “Guys, look, Allah ﷻ promised us struggle. The struggle is here.”¹⁰ ﴿هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ﴾ (33:22) — “Allah and His messenger are true.”¹⁰ (33:22) Look, they came for us. If we weren’t onto something, would they come for us? They wouldn’t. They’d ignore us, right? We’re onto something. That’s why

5. TWO RESPONSES TO THE FEAR OF STRUGGLE

they came for us. Allah ﷻ told us this would happen. When did Allah ﷻ promise that this would happen? فِي الْقُرْآنِ. Did Allah ﷻ promise that something like this would happen? Where did He promise? What did He say?

﴿وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ
وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾¹¹

And surely We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops; but give glad tidings to the steadfast ﴿١٥٥﴾ — Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

Surah Al-Baqara (2): verse 155 (partial)

I promise you, you will be tested with loss. So they are saying, “Aha.” Now what? They look at the situation. Allah ﷻ promised us struggle. This is the struggle.

9. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 12

10. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 22

11. Quran - Surah Al-Baqara (2): verse 155



6. Faith Requires an Active Response

a. Choosing a Perspective That Increases Faith

¹⁰ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا (33:22) — this is what Imam al-Bukhari رحمه الله quotes.

¹⁰ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا (33:22) — “It did but confirm them in their faith and resignation” ¹⁰ (33:22). The same situation decreased somebody else’s الإيمان (imān : faith). Why? Come on, guys. Think, think, think. Yes, Ibrahim? Perspective? Perspective? Did it come to them automatically? As if an angel came and said, “Guys, look, increase your الإيمان (imān : faith).” Were they standing there when a lightning bolt struck them, and their الإيمان (imān : faith) suddenly—did they levitate into the air? الإيمان (imān : faith) is active effort. When they saw the situation, they struggled to keep a positive mindset: “Guys, Allah ﷻ promised us that we would struggle. We will not lose hope in Allah ﷻ.” The root cause of those who ran away, those who responded negatively, is what? وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ

⁵ الظُّنُونَا (33:10) Their minds went into a negative spiral, thinking negatively about Allah ﷻ. And they said, “Allah ﷻ lied to us. Allah ﷻ is horrible. The whole thing is a sham.” And they went negative, negative, negative. These are thoughts. This is their mental health. Yes. And Allah ﷻ described their الإيمان (imān : faith) as linked to their physical and mental state, and to their response to any given situation. Allah ﷻ described it in this way. He described those whose الإيمان (imān : faith) increased in the situation and those whose الإيمان (imān : faith) decreased in the situation. The only difference was their perspective. But what else? They actively had to fight themselves internally for their الإيمان (imān : faith) to increase. It didn’t happen automatically. And this is what we’ve been saying in the last two sessions: الإيمان (imān : faith) doesn’t move until you move. الإيمان (imān : faith) requires effort, exertion, exercise, and effort. We said that الإيمان (imān : faith) is a—إِنَّهُ عَظْلٌ—it’s a muscle. If you don’t exercise it, what happens?

b. Exercising Faith to Face Greater Tests

Now, let me give you an example. Let's go back to the exercise analogy. This situation is like a **مِسْكِين** (miskīn : poor person) going to the gym after six months, with someone helping him with the weights. He lies down on the bench press, and someone loads 300 kilograms onto it. All of a sudden, he tries to lift the 300 kilograms. What is he going to do in this situation? He is going to collapse, right? He isn't ready for this level of weight. But if he had exercised regularly and consistently and worked hard, he could handle much more weight than somebody else who had never tried to exercise in their life. For that person, even the bar alone makes their hands tremble, you know, as if they are about to shatter, because they never, ever made the effort. **إِيمَان** (īmān : faith) requires exertion; it requires effort. But most of all, Allah ﷻ shows us that this is a completely different way of looking at life. One group sees this as trauma, as negative, as a lie, and with a victim mentality: "Oh my gosh, we are victims in this situation." Victimhood, victimhood, negativity, negativity. Boom. They explode, implode. Another group sees this as an opportunity: an opportunity to refine ourselves. This is **إِبْتِلَاء** (ibtilā' : a trial) from Allah ﷻ. This is an opportunity to refine ourselves, to improve. And look, oh Allah ﷻ, even in this situation, we didn't lose our good hope in You.

10. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 22

5. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10

7. Living Out Faith Through Commitment, Consistency, and Preparation

﴿وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا﴾¹⁰ (33:22)

﴿مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا﴾¹

Of the believers are men who are true to that which they covenanted with Allah. Some of them have paid their vow by death (in battle), and some of them still are waiting; and they have not altered in the least ﴿— Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 23

Allah ﷻ says, “Of the believers are men who are true to that which they covenanted with Allah.”¹ (33:23) ﴿صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ﴾¹ (33:23) They proved their sincerity and genuine iman. Iman has levels, just as karate has belts. Just as there are exams in knowledge, iman has exams. That proves your level. Who are you, and what level is your iman? You’re not going to know on a good day. You’re going to know when everything goes wrong. Today is the day your iman is going to be exposed.

a. Those Who Keep Their Promise to Allah ﷻ

Allah ﷻ divided them into three groups. First, the group that was sincerely truthful to their promise to Allah ﷻ. They promised Allah ﷻ: “When the opportunity comes, O Allah, I’m going to stand up. I’m not going to fall.” And they did it. ﴿مِّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ﴾¹ (33:23)

They proved themselves. ﴿وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْتَظِرُ﴾¹ (33:23) Some of them are waiting for the day to prove themselves. This is a very different way to look at life: “O Allah, bring on the next exam. I’m ready. يَا رَبِّ, bring on the next test. I’m ready to confront it with my إِيْمَان (īmān : faith).” ﴿يَنْتَظِرُ﴾¹ (33:23) He’s waiting. He’s waiting for إِبْتِلَاء (ibtīlā’ : trial). He’s

looking forward to the next test. This is completely different from someone who's always trying to escape, run away, and avoid difficulty. Iman trains you to be ready for it because you expect it, because Allah ﷻ promised it. What else? Allah ﷻ promised it's going to come. When it comes, be ready.

b. Consistency Rather Than Fluctuation

¹ ﴿وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا﴾ (33:23). They are people—people of إِيمَان (īmān : faith), as we talked about last time. Iman requires discipline and consistency. You have to get in the reps every week. When you do something very consistently, you work on your thought patterns and your physical worship; you go give صَدَقَةٌ (ṣadaqah : charity), and you go sit with the Quran. Every day. Every day. Every day. Every week. Every week, you will be someone who doesn't change easily. You don't lose these qualities easily. It becomes part of who you are.

¹ ﴿وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا﴾ (33:23). The opposite. Who are the people who fluctuate a lot? Today they're Muslim, tomorrow they're كَافِر (kāfir : disbeliever). The day after tomorrow they're with you; the day after that, they're against you. Who are these people? الْمُنَافِقُونَ (al-munāfiqūn : hypocrites). Is there an ayah that says they change too much? Where's the ayah?

﴿مُذَبْذَبِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ
اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا﴾¹²

Swaying between this (and that), (belonging) neither to these nor to those. He whom Allah causeth to go astray, thou (O Muhammad) wilt not find a way for him ﴿١٤٣﴾ — Marmaduke Pickthall ·

The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

Surah An-Nisaa (4): verse 143 (partial)

These guys, they switch. They switch SIM cards very quickly. One day liberal, next day virgin. يَا إِخْوَةَ شَبَابٍ, one SIM card. Finish. No. Every day, new colors. Chameleons.

c. Preparing for the Day Faith Is Tested

The mark of iman is consistent effort and a new perspective on life. It is being ready to embrace the next test. Every day is a mental, physical, and spiritual practice to prepare yourself to prove your iman. Because the day you get hit with a loan, lose your job, your wife leaves you, your husband leaves you, or your child does something crazy—that's the day. Today is the day, guys. This is what Allah promised you. Are you ready to face it? This is where iman comes to a standstill, and on this day, you will know yourself. You will know the level of your iman. When you are pushed, do you fall to your knees to pray? Or, when you're pushed, do you fall onto your back and run away? Which side? Which way you fall determines where your iman is. All the practice, all the effort, the spiritual muscles, the physical muscles, the building of your worldview—the way you see everything—the knowledge of Allah ﷻ's names, the visits to Scaffold Pike and this mountain, hiking in nature, and spending time in the desert: all of this was to prepare for what?

هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا زَلَالًا شَدِيدًا ۝۸

There were the believers sorely tried, and shaken with a mighty shock ۝— Marmaduke Pickthall ·

The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 11

Be ready. That day is going to come. And that is the day you'll know what your iman is really made of.

10. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 22

1. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 23

12. Quran - Surah An-Nisaa (4): verse 143

8. Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 11

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1. ﴿مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا﴾ (٢٣)

Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 23

"Of the believers are men who are true to that which they covenanted with Allah. Some of them have paid their vow by death (in battle), and some of them still are waiting; and they have not altered in the least ﴿٢٣﴾"

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

2. ﴿إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونًا﴾ (١٠)

Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10

"When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when eyes grew wild and hearts reached to the throats, and ye were imagining vain thoughts concerning Allah ﴿١٠﴾"

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

3. ﴿إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونًا﴾ (١٠)

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Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

4. ﴿إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونًا﴾ (١٠)

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Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

5. *﴿إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونًا ﴿١٠﴾﴾*

Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 10

"When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when eyes grew wild and hearts reached to the throats, and ye were imagining vain thoughts concerning Allah ﴿١٠﴾"

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

6. *﴿وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾﴾*

Quran - Surah Al-Baqara (2): verse 31

"And He taught Adam all the names, then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform Me of the names of these, if ye are truthful ﴿٣١﴾"

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

7. *﴿أَدْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَكِنْ مَا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٥﴾﴾*

Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 5

"Proclaim their real parentage. That will be more equitable in the sight of Allah. And if ye know not their fathers, then (they are) your brethren in the faith, and your clients. And there is no sin for you in the mistakes that ye make unintentionally, but what your hearts purpose (that will be a sin for you). Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful ﴿٥﴾"

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

8. *﴿هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا ﴿١١﴾﴾*

Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 11

"There were the believers sorely tried, and shaken with a mighty shock ﴿١١﴾"

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

9. ﴿وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٢﴾﴾

Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 12

"And when the hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is a disease, were saying: Allah and His messenger promised us naught but delusion ﴿١٢﴾"

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

10. ﴿وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا ﴿٢٢﴾﴾

Quran - Surah Al-Ahzaab (33): verse 22

"And when the true believers saw the clans, they said: This is that which Allah and His messenger promised us. Allah and His messenger are true. It did but confirm them in their faith and resignation ﴿٢٢﴾"

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

11. ﴿وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾﴾

Quran - Surah Al-Baqara (2): verse 155

"And surely We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops; but give glad tidings to the steadfast ﴿١٥٥﴾"

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)

12. ﴿مُذَبِّبِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤٣﴾﴾

Quran - Surah An-Nisaa (4): verse 143

"Swaying between this (and that), (belonging) neither to these nor to those. He whom Allah causeth to go astray, thou (O Muhammad) wilt not find a way for him ﴿١٤٣﴾"

Marmaduke Pickthall · The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (1930)