13403 - Attitude towards fitnah

the question

I have heard that there is a certain attitude that the Muslim should adopt if he faces a time of fitnah (tribulation). What is the attitude towards fitnah?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There is a certain attitude which the Muslim should adopt towards fitnah to that this fitnah will not have a negative effect on him, and so that he will not have a negative effect on the Muslim community.

This attitude includes the following:

(a) Deliberation, gentleness, forbearance and not being hasty

Deliberation, gentleness and forbearance at times of tribulation and upheaval are praiseworthy traits, because they enable the Muslim to see things as they really are and to understand what is going on.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “There is no gentleness in a thing but it adorns it, and the absence of gentleness in anything makes it ugly.” Narrated by Muslim, 4698.

And he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to Ashajj ‘Abdul Qays: “You have two characteristics which Allaah loves, forbearance and deliberation.” Narrated by Muslim, 24.

So we must all be gentle in our thinking and attitudes, and with regard to all events that occur, and we should not be hasty, because that is not the way of the Muslim ummah, especially at times of fitnah.

(b) – Sabr (patience)

We need a great deal of patience, especially at times of fitnah. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to As- Saabiroon (the patient).

Who, when afflicted with calamity, say: “Truly, to Allaah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return.”

They are those on whom are the Salawaat (i.e. who are blessed and will be forgiven) from their Lord, and (they are those who) receive His Mercy, and it is they who are the guided ones”

[al-Baqarah 2:155-157]

It was narrated from Abu Tha’labah al-Khushani that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “After you there will come the days of patience (i.e., days which require patience). Patience during those (days) will be like grasping a live coal. During those (days) the reward for the one who adheres to the commands of Allaah will be equivalent to the reward of fifty men who did an action like his.” He said, “O Messenger of Allaah, the reward of fifty of them?” He said, “The reward of fifty of you.”

Narrated by Abu Dawood, 4341; Ibn Maajah, 4014. Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in al-Saheehah, 494.

With patience, the difference between those who are determined and confident and those who are cowardly and weak becomes apparent. Hence the righteous salaf understood the importance of patience at times of tribulation and new developments. There follow some examples from their life stories:

When the Sahaabah (may Allaah be pleased with them) were being persecuted and tested at the beginning of Islam in Makkah, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) would pass

by them and remind them to be patient. When he passed by the family of Yaasir he would say, “Patience, O family of Yaasir, for you are promised Paradise.” Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Takhreej Fiqh al-Seerah, p. 103.

It was narrated that al-Zubayr ibn ‘Adiyy said: We came to Anas ibn Maalik and complained to him about what we were suffering from al-Hajjaaj. He said, “Be patient, for there never comes to you a time but what follows it is worse, until you meet your Lord. I heard this from your Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).” Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 7068.

Al-Mustawrid al-Qurashi said to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas: “I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say: ‘The Hour will begin when the Romans are the greatest people in number.’” ‘Amr said, “Watch what you say!” He said, “I am saying what I heard from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).” He said, “If you say that, it is a fact, for they have four qualities. They are the most patient of people at times of tribulation; they recover quickly from calamity; they are quick to recover and attack again after defeat; and they are good to the poor, orphans and the weak. And a fifth good quality that they have is that they resist the oppression of kings.” Narrated by Muslim, 2889.

Al-Nu’maan ibn Basheer said: “If there is nothing left in the world but trials and tribulation, then face the trials with patience.”

When the imam of Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Jamaa’ah, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, faced the overwhelming fitnah of those who said that the Qur’aan was created, during the reigns of al-Mu’moon, al-Mu’tasim and al-Waathiq, when he was subjected to lengthy imprisonment and severe beatings, he bore that with patience and adhered to his religion, the straight path, until Allaah granted him victory and relieved him of that distress.

(c) Justice and fairness in all things

One of the strongest causes of differences among people, especially at times of fitnah, is the lack of justice and fairness. If the Muslim strives to become fair to himself and to other people, then many of the problems that arise among Muslims, whether on the individual or communal level, will

be solved, in sha Allah.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whenever you give your word (i.e. judge between men or give evidence), say the truth”

[al-An’aam 6:152]

“and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety”

[al-Maa’idah 5:8]

So it is essential to be just in our words and deeds, especially at times of fitnah, in the sense that we should examine each matter and note its good and bad aspects, weigh them up, and then pass judgement, because examining matters thoroughly will protect the Muslim from attributing to Islam things that are not in accordance with the commands of Allaah. So your justice and fairness at the time of fitnah will save you, in sha Allah.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-‘Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: I urge you, my brothers, to be just and balanced in all things, to look at all issues surrounding any given matter, to find out the more correct ruling concerning it, and to judge all matters in the same way. This is an important principle which the wise man must follow in his relationship with Allaah and in his relationship with other people, to be fair, for Allaah loves those who are fair.

There follow some examples from the lives of our righteous forebears (the salaf) of their keenness to be just and fair:

Muslim (1828) narrated that ‘Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Shimaasah said: I came to ‘Aa’ishah and asked her about something, and she said, “Where are you from?” I said, “I am from Egypt.” She said, “What was the behaviour of your governor towards you in this war of yours?” I said: “We did not experience anything bad from him. If the camel of one of our men died, he would give him another camel. If any one of us lost his slave, he would give him another slave. If anybody was in need of

the basic necessities of life, he would provide them with provisions." She said: "The treatment that was meted out to my brother, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, does not prevent me from telling you what I heard from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). He said in this house of mine: 'O Allaah, whoever gains some kind of control over the affairs of my people and is hard upon them, be hard upon him, and whoever gains some kind of control over the affairs of my people and is kind to them, be kind to him.'"

Al-Nawawi said, commenting on this hadeeth:

This indicates that we should mention the virtues of good people, and not refrain from doing so because we dislike them etc. They differed concerning the way in which this Muhammad was killed. It was said that he was killed in battle, and that he was killed as a prisoner of war after the battle…

The governor in question here was Mu'aawiyah ibn Hudayj who killed Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr. Al-Siyar, 3/38.

And Allaah knows best.