

Determination

It was a gloomy, overcast night. The wind was blowing and it was going to storm. Khadijah and her three young children were sitting on an old worn carpet in their room. Khadijah looked out the window often, trying not to draw her children's attention. She was worried that the storm would break before her husband arrived. Finally, hearing the key turn in the lock, she quickly got up, telling her children to go welcome their father.

"Oh mother", said the youngest child, "Has he brought us food?" She gently scolded him, saying, "This is not important. Don't ask him this question." The children ran towards their father and, although she was upset, Khadijah, too, greeted him with a smile. Her husband had brought a few pieces of bread and cheese, which he handed to his wife. She soon served the simple meal on plates that had lost their colour through long use.

Khadijah spoke cheerfully while they ate and later the children slept, dreaming of sweets, toys and games. Their parents sat quietly for a while.

"So this year is about to end," Khadijah's husband, Hassan, said bitterly, "And I still haven't found a job. We have spent our savings and sold what we could of our furniture. We have nothing left with which to fight our hunger."

His wife replied, "We still have faith and determination, which are the keys to all which is good and brings happiness."

"What good thing or happiness has our faith brought us? Our children are wearing torn clothes and are hungry. It is this very faith that has made life difficult for us, and it is guidance, which has led us to poverty! In the past we were living in luxury..."

Khadijah interrupted her husband, asking, "What kind of luxury was it? Since when has gambling been a way of providing for one's family! Allah has said that gambling is forbidden to Muslims. How could we have been happy knowing that the food we ate and the clothes we wore would send us to the Fire in the Hereafter? Our gain caused others to go hungry and naked!"

"Yes, Khadijah," Hassan said. "I know you are right. For these very reasons I gave up gambling, but it has brought us nothing. I thank you for helping me out of that bottomless pit. All praise belongs to Allah for His guidance. Still, poverty is bitter and the shamefulness of being needy is almost unbearable."

Upon hearing these words, Khadijah consoled him saying, "Oh Hassan, it is only temporary. Allah says that with every difficulty comes relief. The life of the Hereafter is the real and endless one. We still have hope. This future, everlasting life is the one we should care about and make ready with good deeds. Don't regret what has passed; instead, thank Allah for possessing the means of obtaining His forgiveness. Happiness belongs to those who are patient while facing hardships and avoid disobeying Allah."

"Oh Khadijah, I am not without hope, but I'm afraid that Satan will cause me to sin— then I will fall and lose everything."

"I still have my gold wedding ring," his wife said.

"Tomorrow I shall sell it and we will have money for a while. Almighty Allah will help us. Be confident that you will find a job, with Allah's help. Allah doesn't leave those who worship Him without hope of His compassion. You will surely see how the future will brighten for you, and how generous Allah is to those who believe."

With a sigh, her husband replied, "If you think so, I will believe you but what is the wisdom behind our hardship?"

"Oh, Hassan," She cried. "Don't you know the Qur'anic verse:

"And we will most certainly test you with what you fear, and hunger, and loss of property and lives. Therefore, give good news to the patient?" (2. 157)

"But when will this hardship end?" he asked.

"As soon as we pass our test successfully," she replied. "Through patience, prayer, and avoiding sinful ways of getting money, we shall succeed."

At this point, the couple stopped talking and fell asleep, putting their trust in Allah. At dawn they awoke for their morning prayers. Afterwards, Khadijah began preparing breakfast and her husband sat down to recite some suras from the Qur'an. When the children woke up, their mother poured tea for them. One of the children asked for bread. He said, "My friend and his brothers have eggs and butter every morning."

His mother, feeling great pain in her heart, smiled, kissed him and said, "Tomorrow, by Allah's will, you will have whatever you like."

The child innocently asked, "Why do you say: 'By Allah's will'?"

"Because," she replied, "It is Allah Who gives us everything and helps us to do our work. Without His will, we can't even breathe."

"Mother, does that mean Allah will give us eggs and bread for breakfast?"

"Yes, my son. By the will of Allah it will happen." The father listened to his wife. He was greatly surprised by her strong faith. He began to feel hopeful and confident. He started talking with his children about the days to come and how Allah would help him to find a good job. Then he would buy whatever sweets and fruits they like. Then there was a knock at the door. Wondering whom it could be at such an early hour, Hassan went to find out. When he returned, his face was shining with happiness. Upon seeing this, his wife said, "Hassan, I feel our test is over."

In a voice choking with emotion, he replied. "Yes, my dear wife, Allah, the Exalted, has ended our test. Praise to Allah, it has happened with your patience, efforts and faith. There is a hadith which says: 'A good woman is better than 1000 men' our hardship is finished by the grace of Allah and your strong faith."

"Was it the messenger of Hajj Sahib?"

"No, it was Hajj Sahib himself. He said that he had been looking for someone to manage his business and heard about our situation and my past experience. Allah used him as the way to save us from despair and to give us hope, as Allah promised to the patient believers. Hajj Sahib said to me, 'You are now cleaner and purer than all of us. You are now as one newly born.'"

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