

Struggling With Conflict

As Fatimah walked along the tree-lined street, thoughts filled her head and mocked her sensitive emotions and delicate feelings. She hurried to reach the source of pleasure, security and light in her life. She wished she could overcome this nagging doubt, but she was weak, and needed support. She told herself, "I will tell her everything. I will explain all of my difficulties to her. I will confess to her my fears."

When Fatimah reached her friend's home, she knocked anxiously at the door. She feared disappointment; not finding her friend Aminah at home. Aminah came forward to welcome her, they shook hands warmly and then entered a room where they settled to talk. Aminah chided her friend gently, saying, "Oh, I have missed you. Welcome again, dear friend." Upon hearing her friend's warm voice Fatimah felt at ease and nearly forgot the aim of her visit. She remained silent, so Aminah gave her a smile of encouragement and said, "You do not look like your usual self, Fatimah. Tell me what is bothering you."

Her question helped Fatimah to speak. With a trembling voice she said, "Oh sister, something is very wrong with me. My courage has failed me. I thought I was well protected against Satan and whatever troubles in my way to reach my goal. But..." Fatimah silently thought of the right words to express her suffering, but Aminah was quick to understand her pain. Aminah asked, "But what, Fatimah?" Fatimah replied, "I have lost courage; I can no longer endure these difficulties I am facing as a religious instructor."

"What difficulties are these, Fatimah? Tell me about them. I am your sister in faith."

Fatimah told her, "Being a Muslim, I believe in our responsibilities towards our beloved religion, Islam. I have tried my best to guide misled Muslim girls; to save them from our deviated society. But society, Oh, Aminah...."

"What about society?" asked her friend.

"It is a corrupted one, with no morals. Everything is measured with materialistic values. Living in this society has made me feel a bitterness I never dreamed I could feel."

Aminah admonished Fatimah, "Did you think that the road of religious guidance was strewn with flowers and empty of obstacles? We should not deny these difficulties. But we are told not to worry about troubles and hardships as long as we are on the right path for the sake of Allah. Haven't you heard the words of one Muslim woman believer: 'whatever difficulty we encounter in the way of Islam is not a difficulty, and whatever bitterness we may feel is not bitterness.'¹ Now tell me Fatimah, what specifically has happened to upset you?"

Fatimah sighed, "It is not anyone particular incident."

Then Aminah told her, "So you feel cowardice in front of deviated currents, and you fear harmful ideologies."

When Fatimah heard these words she cried, "No, I am never afraid of such things. It is only troubles and obstacles that have shaken my faith in me, as well as my lack of experience and understanding."

"What else bothers you, Fatimah? Tell me everything so that I can be of help to you."

Fatimah said, "From the beginning, I had a strong desire to serve my religion by all means and at all levels. I believed also that Islam knows no limits...." Fatimah stopped, as if not knowing what to say. Aminah explained, "That is why it hurts you so much to find that society is still under the yoke of false measures, that a person is judged through a materialistic view point and within a frame of pseudo-measures. But had society been a Utopia believing in Islamic values, considering an individual through realistic measures, then our cause (Islamic guidance), our responsibility would not have purified our souls and increased our determination to surmount any difficulties. Had we been struggling in a virtuous society, guiding our fellow Muslims in an ideal environment, flowing with the tide instead of having to oppose it as we do today, then we would not have been among those referred to in the Holy Qur'an as patient men and women:

Surely men and women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and patient women... Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward. (Al Ahzab, 33:35).

"Fatimah then said, "But Aminah, our enemies rejoice, they mock us when we are distressed or are facing hardships." Aminah smiled and asked, "Haven't you read the Qur'anic verse:

"You shall certainly be tried respecting your wealth and souls... surely this is one of the affairs determined upon." (Aale-Imran, 3: 186)

and the verse:

"Don't think of those who rejoice for what they have done... and they shall have a painful chastisement." (Aale-Imran, 3: 188)

"The Holy Qur'an has clearly revealed everything. It has lined the path with thorns and obstacles, but the aftermath with bounties and blessings. We must be sure of ourselves, in order to stand firm and avoid collapsing in the face of difficulties. We must always remember the early days of the Message of Islam and all the hardships that faced the great Messenger of Allah (SAWS) when he called on people to give up the worship of their idols and to worship Allah. The One, the Almighty."

Aminah continued, "The Prophet toiled to prune a primitive nation which was overgrown with wild traditions such as unprovoked attacks, the plundering of properties, murder, the drinking of alcohol and the committing of adultery as well as other indecencies. He planted and nurtured Divine values and morals in the people in order to make them the best nation ever found among nations. We should remember Muhammad, son of Abdullah, the offspring of the best family in the Arab Peninsula and he noblest member of the Quraysh tribe. All of the people, young and old, high and low in society, agreed that he was a truthful, honest person.

We should try to imagine the responsibility this great man assumed when he was chosen by Allah to carry His Message. All of the tribes rose against him and joined forces opposing him. They threatened him and barred any trading with him. Standing firm, he neither relinquished his divine duty nor stopped calling on the people to worship Allah. He and his followers were isolated, as if he was a deviated person. He endured every kind of insult and mockery. They called him a wizard while he was the Prophet, and called him a liar while he was the most truthful honest person in their midst. They said he had been taught (by someone) while his knowledge had been revealed to him by Heaven. They accused him of madness while he had the greatest prophetic wisdom."

"We should keep all this in mind, and remember as well the Prophet's Dua (words of prayer) to Allah when he was in the village of Al-Taif calling people to worship God. The people of that village sent their sons to throw stones at him, make fun of and insult him. He took refuge by a wall and stretched out his hands towards the sky, praying to Allah, 'Oh, God to you I complain my weakness, my lack of means and the scorn of my people. Oh God of the oppressed and of mine, to whom do You leave me, to a wrathful relative or to a foe of whom you gave control over me? If You are not angry at me, I don't care whatever happens to me; Your compassion is great enough for me. ' "

Aminah went on, "Fatimah, we must remember the Prophet's words after his painful suffering. As long as we are certain that our ideas are right and our belief is true, we should not be daunted by falsehood and fear. Fatimah, remember the honorable Zaynab (AS), the daughter of the Leader of the Faithful, Imam Ali (AS), when she stood near the body of her slain brother Imam Husayn (AS) on the Day of Ashura. He was to her not only a brother, but a supporter and a defender, yet she put up her hands and said: 'Oh, God, accept from us this sacrifice.' Yes, Fatimah, we must remember all this in order to remain devoted to Allah."

As soon as Aminah stopped speaking, Fatimah cried and said, "Oh my dear friend Aminah, may Allah never deprive me of your friendship. You are a guiding light for me. Your words have revived my spirit,

which I nearly lost. You have helped my faith to remain firm and steadfast. How stupid I was to have lost all hope!",

Aminah told her, "No Fatimah, you are neither stupid nor had you lost hope. These are feelings that arise as result of many reasons. The best evidence of your sincerity is your firm stand and faith. You have come directly to me to help you overcome obstacles which are the result of this deviated society and which you have no hand in producing. Oh Fatimah, have you abandoned reading as you have abandoned visiting me?"

"I never abandoned you; I was trying to solve an inner conflict (of feelings) and I was afraid."

Aminah said, "You were afraid to speak frankly to me, but you did not fear the serious results of remaining silent?"

She smiled at Fatimah, who said, "You should be quite sure that I will never feel weak again, and I will always admit my fears and my hopes to you. You will be my guiding angel as you have always been."

Aminah embraced her, saying, "Oh Fatimah, I am not an angel. I am only a loving, advising sister to you and to all Muslim girls."

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