



471198 - Is there reward for the Alzheimer's patient?

the question

A relative of mine died, and she (may Allah have mercy on her) was an Alzheimer's patient. She did not understand anything for six years, and her children took full care of her, because she was bedridden during her final year. Someone said: For the last six years of her life, she was not subject to reward or punishment, because reason is the basis of accountability. Allah, may He be Exalted, only tested her to know who among her children would be good to her and who would be otherwise. Is what he said true? Or is Alzheimer's one of the sicknesses in which reward will be recorded for the sufferer for what he used to do when he was healthy and not travelling? Is it an expiation for which the sufferer will be rewarded even though he is not aware of what is going on, so it is not known whether he faces it with patience or impatience?

Summary of answer

Alzheimer's disease will be a cause of expiation for the sufferer, if Allah wills, and he will have the reward for going through calamity. In addition to that, he will have the reward of righteous deeds that he regularly used to do before he was stricken with this disease.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

I.

Alzheimer's is a disease that destroys the nerves and gradually leads to atrophy of the brain. It affects parts of the brain that are responsible for memory and information. It starts in a very subtle way and gradually deteriorates, ultimately leading to memory loss.

Alzheimer's disease usually passes through three stages:



The first stage: cognitive symptoms, such as forgetting recent events, repeating what one says, and difficulty in planning for the future.

The second, moderate stage in which the cognitive symptoms are: difficulty in abstract thinking, difficulty in recognising directions, obvious problems with memory, and needing the help of others in doing daily tasks, such as getting dressed and eating.

The third, late stage in which the cognitive symptoms are: almost complete forgetfulness and memory loss.

Here we will discuss the third stage, as in the case of the person mentioned in the question.

II.

With regard to whether there is reward or punishment for the late stage Alzheimer's patient, as in the case of the person mentioned in the question, she is not accountable for doing or refraining from certain actions, like those who are accountable, because she is no longer accountable because she no longer possesses reason.

But she will be rewarded for going through calamity, and some of her bad deeds will be expiated, which is an extra reward in addition to the reward for showing patience at the time of calamity, and it does not require any deed or intention.

According to the hadith narrated from `Urwah ibn az-Zubayr, `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), the wife of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "There is no calamity that befalls a Muslim but Allah will expiate some of his sins thereby, even a thorn that pricks him." Narrated by al-Bukhari (5317). According to a report narrated by Muslim: "There is nothing that befalls a believer, not even a thorn that pricks him, but Allah will record one good deed for him and will remove one bad deed from him." Muslim (2572).

Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The authentic hadiths clearly state that there is reward just for going through hardship and trials. As for showing patience and acceptance, that is



something extra for which a person may be rewarded in addition to the reward for undergoing calamity.

Al-Qarafi said: Calamities will definitely be a cause of expiation, whether the individual shows acceptance or not, but if he shows acceptance (and does not resent it), the expiation of sins will be greater, otherwise it will be less... As a matter of fact, calamity is expiation for sins that equal it in calibre, and if a person shows acceptance, he will be rewarded for that. And if the afflicted person has no sins to be expiated, he will have reward instead, equivalent to the sins that could have been expiated.

End quote from *Fat-h al-Bari* by Ibn Hajar, 10/105.

The report narrated by Muslim indicates that the grace of Allah is immense, and once a person goes through calamity, he will be granted both (reward and expiation).

III.

The apparent meaning of the texts indicates that the one who is afflicted with Alzheimer's and has righteous deeds that he used to do regularly, the reward for the deed will continue to be written for him when he is afflicted with Alzheimer's. Thus this disease is included in the general meaning of the hadith that was narrated from Abu Burdah, who said: I heard Abu Musa say several times: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: "If a person falls sick or travels, there will be recorded for him a reward like that of what he used to do when he was not travelling and was healthy." Narrated by al-Bukhari (2834).

Ash-Shafa'i (may Allah have mercy on him) said, differentiating between the drunkard and the insane person who has lost control of his cognitive function: The sick person will be rewarded and his sins will be expiated by the sickness, for the pen was lifted from him when he lost his cognitive function. In contrast, the drunkard is a sinner who is to be punished by beating for his drunkenness, and the pen has not been lifted from him. How can you compare the one who is subject to punishment to the one who is subject to reward?



End quote from *Al-Umm* by Imam ash-Shafa`i, 5/270.

Ibn `Abidin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The supplication for increased reward that was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) – when he offered condolences to Mu`adh for the loss of a son of his – indicates that reward is granted for merely going through calamity.

The scholar Ibn al-Humam said in *Al-Musayarah*: The Hanafis said: What is narrated in the reports of promises of provision and reward for acts of obedience, and reward for pain suffered by the believer or his child, even a thorn that pricks him, is pure grace and generosity from Allah, may He be Exalted, which will inevitably come to pass because His promise is true. End quote.

But is it stipulated that one must show patience to attain reward or not?

Ibn Hajar said: Al-`Izz ibn `Abd as-Salaam thinks that going through calamity and hardship does not lead to reward, because that is not something that results from the individual's actions; rather he will be rewarded if he faces it with patience. If he does not show patience, it will expiate his sins only, because in the case of that which expiates sin, it is not stipulated that it should be connected to his efforts, such as calamity. So showing impatience does not prevent expiation; rather it is another calamity that has befallen him.

This was refuted by what ash-Shafa`i (may Allah have mercy on him) said: that both the insane person and the sick person who has no control over his cognitive function will be rewarded, and his sin will be expiated by merely falling ill. Thus he will be rewarded, even though he has none of the cognitive function that is required to be able to show patience. This is supported by the report in al-Bukhari and Muslim: “No fatigue, constant pain, worry, grief, distress or harm befalls a believer, not even a thorn that pricks him, but Allah will expiate some of his sins thereby”, and also by the authentic hadith “If a person falls sick or travels, there will be recorded for him a reward like that of what he used to do when he was not travelling and was healthy.” This indicates that by the grace of Allah, may He be exalted, he will have reward like that of the deed that he used to do before, that he is now prevented from doing because of sickness.



So the one who is afflicted with calamity and shows patience will have two rewards: one because of the calamity and one because of showing patience in bearing it.

And for the one who does not show patience, if that is due to a valid excuse such as insanity, then he will have the same reward as is mentioned above, and if he does not show patience because he panics, he will not get either of the two rewards (but his sin will be expiated). End quote.

Conclusion: it is stipulated that a person should show patience in the face of calamity in order to be rewarded, unless his lack of patience was due to insanity.

As for sins being expiated thereby, this will happen regardless.

End quote from *Hashiyat Ibn `Abidin*, 2/240.

And Allah knows best.