84327 - Problems with his family because he is depressed

the question

I grew up in a miserable life since my earliest age. My father was married to two women, his first wife and my mother. My oldest brother was in full control of the home. And he was an oppressor; no one could talk or even whisper in his presence. I am still unaware of the reason behind this. My father has left everything to him. Even my mother and my step mother, they cannot say a word or discuss him. When I was in my fourth or fifth year in school, my father divorced my mother. I have seen -since then- the woe by my eyes, I have seen all the colours of torment –by Allah-, reprimanded for the smallest mistakes. My brother and my step mother are hard-hearted with me. He hits me until I bleed. And my father does not at all care. My brothers and I have since grown up and started to work. My father sees my brothers as angels, and sees me as nothing, worthless. My brothers are arrogant, and they cut off ties with me, but I tried to keep the relationship strong. As they continued to treat me very badly, I cut off ties with them as well. I have tried to be close to my father but he insists on his unfair behaviours. I am suffering from this unfairness. I am depressed, I have no self confidence. What is the solution?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Undoubtedly what you are suffering from is painful, and mistreatment from a relative is worse than the same kind of mistreatment from a stranger, but the Muslim who adheres to the beliefs of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah knows that "whatever befalls him could not have missed him, and whatever misses him could not have befallen him," so he implements the means of attaining happiness and does what Allaah has enjoined upon him without falling short, and if Allaah does not decree good for him, then whatever befalls him is a test by means of which Allaah expiates his bad deeds and raises him in status.

Secondly:

The mistreatment that you have experienced at the hands of your father, his wife and your brother is something that is very hurtful when it happens, and it is something which indicates that the shaytaan has prevailed over the hearts and minds of those who respond to the command to do evil, and who are reluctant to do good.

What you have done of seeking to uphold ties with them even though they cut you off is what you should have continued to do. You erred by cutting off ties with them. The Muslim seeks reward with Allaah for whatever befalls him of wrongdoing, and hopes to be rewarded for his patience by his Lord, may He be blessed and exalted. If this mistreatment comes from his parents or relatives, he does not cut off ties with them unless being close to them will affect his religious commitment. You should remember that Allaah will support you and help you if you uphold ties with them even though they cut you off.

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that a man said: O Messenger of Allaah, I have relatives with whom I try to keep in touch, but they cut me off. I treat them well, but they abuse me. I am patient and kind towards them, but they insult me. He said: “If you are as you say, then it is as if you are putting hot ashes in their mouths. Allaah will continue to support you as long as you continue to do that.”

Narrated by Muslim (2558).

Allaah has made this the etiquette that is required of the Muslim with all people: he should be forbearing with the ignorant and treat kindly those who mistreat him. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better (i.e. Allaah orders the faithful believers to be patient at the time of anger, and to excuse those who treat them badly) then verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend.

35. But none is granted it (the above quality) except those who are patient — and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion (of happiness in the Hereafter, i.e., Paradise and of a high moral character) in this world.

36. And if an evil whisper from Shaytaan (Satan) tries to turn you away (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) (from doing good), then seek refuge in Allaah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower”

[Fussilat 41:34-36]

Shaykh Ibn Sa’di (may Allaah have mercy on him) said in his Tafseer (p. 558):

i.e., good deeds and acts of obedience that are done for the sake of Allaah, and evil deeds and acts of disobedience that anger Him and do not please him, are not equal. Kindness towards people and mistreatment of others are not equal, whether in and of themselves or in their qualities or in their consequences. “Is there any reward for good other than good?” [al-Rahmaan 55:60].

Then He enjoined a specific type of kindness, which is of a high status, namely kindness towards the one who mistreats you, and He said: “Repel (the evil) with one which is better” i.e., if someone mistreats you, especially if he has great rights over you, such as a relative or friend and the like, who mistreats you in word or in deed, then respond by treating him kindly, so if he cuts you off, uphold ties with him, if he wrongs you, then forgive him, if he talks about you, in your absence or in your presence, do not respond to him, rather forgive him and speak gently to him. If he forsakes you and does not speak to you, then speak well to him, and say salaam to him. If you respond to his mistreatment with kindness, that will do a great deal of good: “then verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend.”

“But none is granted it” means, no one is enabled to attain this praiseworthy quality, “except those who are patient” in putting up with things that they dislike, and force themselves to do that which Allaah loves. For people are inclined to respond to mistreatment in like manner, and not to forgive it, so how about responding in a kind manner? If a person makes himself be patient and obeys the command of his Lord, and realizes the great reward that will bring, and understands that responding to bad treatment in like manner will not serve any purpose and will only make the

enmity worse, and that good treatment will not lower his status, rather the one who shows humility for the sake of Allaah will be raised in status, then the matter will become easy for him, and he will do that with joy and pleasure.

“and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion” is because it is the characteristic of the best of people, by means of which a person can attain a high status in this world and in the Hereafter, and it is one of the greatest qualities of good character and good manners. End quote.

Ibn Hibbaan al-Basti (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:
What the wise person must do is train himself to adhere to the quality of forgiveness towards all people, and try to forget about waiting for an opportunity to retaliate for bad treatment, because nothing can cancel out the bad effects of bad treatment apart from good treatment, and nothing can make bad treatment worse and increase its bad effects but responding in like manner.

Rawdat al-‘Uqala’ wa Nuzhat al-Fudala’ (p. 166)

This does not mean that if you uphold ties with them you should not criticize their actions or highlight their mistakes. Rather you are obliged to do that, because this comes under the heading of naseehah (offering sincere advice) that Allaah has enjoined upon you, so that they will see the error of their ways and set their affairs straight. If you see that they are changing for the better, then it is a great favour that you have done to them, and if they do not respond to your advice, then you should keep on trying, and seek help by praying to Allaah to set their affairs straight. Do not cut off ties with them altogether, rather try to stay in touch even if that is kept to a minimum.

Thirdly:

As for what has befallen you of depression and a lack of self confidence, this is the result of what you have suffered of anxiety and distress, but you should not give in to it. You should realize that this depression will cause you mental and physical illnesses if you continue to give in to it. You have to start treating yourself and face reality, and realize that people are of different natures and you will find both good and bad with them, and that there are others who are suffering far worse than you are suffering. You have no option but to follow the prescribed means of seeking

tranquillity so that you can start to enjoy a life of peace and contentment with no worry or distress.

We can sum up what we want you to do as follows:

1-

Accept the decree of Allaah, may He be exalted, and try to advise your father, his wife and your brother in the way that is best.

2-

Always remember Allaah, which includes reciting the du'aa's which are aimed at dealing with such matters.

(a)

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Those who believed (in the Oneness of Allaah — Islamic Monotheism), and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allaah verily, in the remembrance of Allaah do hearts find rest"

[al-Ra'd 13:28]

(b)

It was narrated that 'Abd-Allaah ibn Mas'ood said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "There is no-one who is afflicted by distress and grief, and says: 'Allaahumma inni 'abduka ibn 'abdika ibn amatija naasyati bi yadika, maada fiyya hukmuka, 'adlun fiyya qadaa'uka. As'aluka bi kulli ismin huwa laka sammayta bihi nafsaka aw anzaltahu fi kitaabika aw 'allamtahu ahadan min khalqika aw ista'tharta bihi fi 'ilm il-ghayb 'indaka an taj'al al-Qur'aana rabee' qalbi wa noor sadri wa jalaa' huzni wa dhihaab hammi (O Allaah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave, son of Your maidservant; my forelock is in Your hand, Your command over me is forever executed and Your decree over me is just. I ask You by every name belonging to You which

You have named Yourself with, or revealed in Your Book, or You taught to any of Your creation, or You have preserved in the knowledge of the Unseen with You, that You make the Qur’aan the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety),’ but Allaah will take away his distress and grief, and replace it with joy.” It was said to him: “O Messenger of Allaah, should we learn this?” He said: “Of course; everyone who hears it should learn it.”

Narrated by Ahmad (3704); classed as saheeh by Shaykh al-Albaani in al-Silsilah al-Saheehah (199).

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

One of the means of finding tranquillity is always remembering Him in all situations and in all places, for dhikr has an amazing impact in bringing tranquillity and a sense of joy, and neglecting it has an amazing impact in causing a sense of distress, anxiety and pain.

Zaad al-Ma’aad (2/22).

3-

Filling one’s time with seeking knowledge, calling people to Allaah and reading the biographies of the righteous.

4-

Stopping looking at haraam things, mixing with people unnecessarily, overeating and oversleeping.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Another means of finding tranquillity is to stop looking, speaking, listening, mixing with people, eating and sleeping more than is necessary, because these excesses will turn to pain, worry and distress in the heart, and will cause strain, stress and pain. Indeed, most of the punishments in this world and in the Hereafter result from these things.

Zaad al-Ma’aad (2/22).

You will find – if Allaah wills – that this worry, distress and sense of unhappiness that you feel will disappear, and will be replaced with tranquillity and peace of mind.

We ask Allaah to relieve you of worries and distress, and to guide your family to the best of words, deeds and attitudes. We ask Him, may He be exalted, to increase your reward and to help you to remember Him, thank Him and worship Him properly.

For more information please see the answer to question no. 21677, 45847 and 4631.

See also in the Books section of our website: Dealing with Worries and Stress.

And Allaah knows best.