

The Reasons for Strength and Empowerment in the Light of the Holy Qur'an

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Abstract

This research explores the foundational role of the fear of God (khawf Allah) as a pivotal cause of strength and empowerment (tamkeen) in both individual spiritual life and collective societal success, as elucidated in the Quran and classical Islamic scholarship. The study delineates two dimensions of divine fear: the fear of God's punishment and the fear of God's essence, emphasizing that the latter represents a higher, more profound spiritual state attained by scholars and devout believers. The fear of God serves as a catalyst for sincere worship, ethical conduct, and social justice, while excessive fear leading to despair is cautioned against in the Quran and prophetic teachings.

Through an examination of Qur'anic verses and classical exegeses such as those by Al-Tabari, Al-Sa'di, and Al-Jurjani, the research highlights fear as a means to achieve divine favor, moral rectitude, and ultimately, empowerment on earth including victory over adversaries and inheritance of lands. This empowerment is presented not merely as temporal dominance but as a manifestation of God's promise to those who maintain sincere faith and righteous deeds. The transformation from fear to security and tranquility is a key theme, where fear prompts steadfastness and sincerity, culminating in God's provision of peace and dominion.

The study also addresses the psychological and theological processes by which believers overcome fear through reliance on God's guidance, exemplified in the narratives of prophets such as Moses (Musa) and the lessons drawn for ordinary believers. The importance of purifying intentions, abandoning selfish desires, and deepening one's relationship with God is underscored as prerequisites for attaining true empowerment.

Drawing on a wide range of classical Islamic texts and contemporary scholarly works, including theological dictionaries and treatises on fear and trust, the research synthesizes insights from Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and spirituality. It concludes that the path to divine empowerment is inseparable from fear rooted in knowledge and love of God, balanced with hope in His mercy, and expressed through unwavering commitment to justice and monotheistic worship.

Recommendations stress contemplative engagement with Quranic texts, strengthening of faith through patience and righteous deeds, avoidance of despair, and cultivation of a just character dedicated to sincere worship. This comprehensive approach integrates scriptural exegesis with spiritual psychology, offering valuable perspectives for both academic inquiry and practical application in contemporary Muslim contexts.

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1. Introduction

This research discusses the reasons for strength and empowerment in the light of the Qur'an. In it, we will review the most prominent of these reasons, show their importance, how they can be applied, and what evidence supports their validity and adoption. My methodology in this research is descriptive and analytical, based on reviewing the reasons that lead to strength and empowerment through Qur'anic verses, in order to understand the foundations upon which strength and empowerment are built, to clarify them, and to act upon them. By the grace of Allah upon us and upon people, our libraries provide supporting sources on this subject, so I did not find anything that made my task of completing this research difficult. The importance of this research lies in presenting the reasons that must be adopted by those who seek to attain strength and empowerment.

2. Knowing the Reasons for Strength and Empowerment and Proper Preparation for This Stage

2.1 Knowing the Reasons for Strength and Empowerment and Proper Preparation for This Stage

The linguistic meaning of reasons: It is the plural of *sabab* (reason or cause), and *as-sabab* is everything by which something else is reached. In some versions of *As-Sihah* : everything by which one seeks access to something else. For example, "I made so-and-so a means (*sabab*) to reach so-and-so for my need," meaning an intermediary or means. And in metaphorical usage: "May Allah provide you with a reason for goodness." And "I created a path for water to flow," meaning I leveled it.

In terminology: A reason (*sabab*) is defined as that which is a means of reaching a ruling without directly affecting it.

Strength in language: (*al-quwwah*) is the opposite of weakness.

In terminology: Strength is the capacity of a living being to perform difficult actions. Thus, the powers of the vegetative soul are called natural powers, the powers of the animal soul are called psychic powers, and the powers of the human soul are called rational powers. The rational powers, in terms of perceiving universals, are called theoretical power, and in terms of deriving intellectual crafts from their evidences by opinion, are called practical power.

Empowerment in language: From (*makkan*), "I empowered him over something" means I gave him authority and ability over it.

In terminology: It is the state of firmness and stability upon uprightness.

From these linguistic and terminological definitions that we have mentioned, we find that they are interconnected and complement each other.

2.2 The Preparation Stage for Empowerment

Before addressing the topic of empowerment and its causes, we must know how to properly prepare for this stage. It is necessary to set a clear plan to follow the steps in a sequential and organized manner that ensures we reach the goal we seek, away from randomness and confusion. In this way, we save time, address points of weakness, focus on points of strength, and build self-confidence gradually in a way that brings tranquility to the heart.

By following the stories of the prophets in the Qur'an, we see a clear development in the stages they went through during their mission of *da'wah*, starting at the personal level and then at the public level. By their human nature, they suffered from matters that we also suffer from, and Allah Almighty decreed that they too would endure them so that they feel what ordinary people feel, and at the same time, we follow their example, for they are humans like us, as Allah Almighty said: "Say, if there were angels walking peacefully on the earth, We would have sent down to them an angel as a messenger."

We find that the prophets and messengers, before reaching the stage of empowerment, experienced fear until they overcame it. For example, Moses (peace be upon him) was afraid before confronting Pharaoh until Allah expanded his chest, as He said: “And they have a charge against me, so I fear that they will kill me.” And He said: “So he became fearful within the city, looking about.” And He said: “So he left it fearful and vigilant. He said, ‘My Lord, save me from the wrongdoing people.’” And He said: “Throw down your staff.” But when he saw it moving as if it were a snake, he turned in flight and did not look back. [Allah said], ‘O Moses, do not fear. Indeed, in My presence the messengers do not fear.’”

We also find that Abraham (peace be upon him) felt fear, as in His saying: “And certainly did Our messengers come to Abraham with good tidings; they said, ‘Peace.’ He said, ‘Peace,’ and did not delay in bringing them a roasted calf. But when he saw their hands not reaching for it, he distrusted them and felt from them apprehension. They said, ‘Fear not. We have been sent to the people of Lot.’” And His saying: “Has there reached you the story of the honored guests of Abraham? When they entered upon him and said, ‘Peace,’ he said, ‘[Peace], [to] a people unknown.’ Then he went to his family and came with a fat [roasted] calf. And placed it near them; he said, ‘Will you not eat?’ And he felt from them apprehension. They said, ‘Fear not,’ and gave him good tidings of a learned boy.”

In this stage, we must shed light on fear from both the psychological and religious aspects in order to understand the fruit of fear.

2.2.1 Fear According to Psychologists

It is a natural internal emotional state that an individual feels in certain situations, and they behave in a way that distances them from the source of harm. It is something natural from childhood to old age, but in a reasonable and moderate degree, and it is necessary to protect the individual from what causes harm, leading to caution and attentiveness. Fear is an instinct inherent in human nature that grows under suitable conditions and drives a person to seek appropriate treatment. Doubt and imagination are two conditions suitable for its growth, and surprise is one of the most dangerous causes that trigger it, while the extinction of these triggers depends on knowing the treatment.

When contemplating this statement alongside the story of Moses (peace be upon him), we find a remarkable agreement between psychology and the Qur’an on this matter, as Allah Almighty says: “And We inspired the mother of Moses, ‘Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and will make him [one] of the messengers.’” Thus, Moses (peace be upon him), since he was an infant, fear accompanied him and his mother.

Imam Al-Tabari interpreted fear in His saying: “And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient,” saying: His words “with something of fear” mean fear of facing the enemy, and hunger is famine. He says: We will surely test you with something of fear that befalls you from your enemy, and a year that befalls you in which there is famine and hardship, and your needs will become difficult to obtain, leading to a decrease in your wealth, and wars that occur between you and your enemies from the disbelievers, decreasing your numbers, the death of your children and offspring, and barrenness that causes your fruits to decrease. All of this is a test from Me for you, and a trial to distinguish the truthful in their faith from the liars, and to know those of insight in their religion among you from the hypocrites and the doubtful.

On this basis, we find that the mother of Moses (peace be upon him) was afraid of confronting the people of Pharaoh because of their oppression, tyranny, and corruption on earth, as Allah Almighty said: “And [recall] when We saved you from the people of Pharaoh, who were afflicting you with the worst torment – killing your sons and keeping your women alive. And in that was a great trial from your Lord.”

From this, we conclude that fear accompanies a person from childhood and grows and increases over time until they grow old, even until the moment of death, as Allah Almighty said: “Indeed, those who have said, ‘Our Lord is Allah’ and then remained steadfast – the angels will descend upon them, [saying], ‘Do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised.’”

When researching in psychology for an explanation of why the mother of Moses (peace be upon him) cast him into the river, we find that those who experience fear tend to avoid situations that trigger their fears, and they remain in a state of anticipation, becoming very sensitive to anything around them related to their fears. For example, a woman who suffers from a fear of spiders will look around the room before sitting down comfortably, and a woman who suffers from a fear of birds will avoid city streets where pigeons are likely to be found and will choose routes with fewer birds.

Based on this, the action of the mother of Moses (peace be upon him) to protect her son was a natural instinctive behavior, driven by her motherhood and the fear that accompanied her.

2.2.2 Fear from the Perspective of Islamic Sharia

Fear holds a special importance in Islamic Sharia because it drives people towards righteous deeds and keeps them away from committing immoral actions. Fear is a path to closeness with Allah Almighty, and it is the way of the believers who have knowledge of Allah, those who seek the Hereafter and work for it.

Abu Hafs said: "Fear is the whip of Allah with which He straightens those who stray from His door." He also said: "Fear is a lamp in the heart; by it one sees what is within of good and evil. Everyone whom you fear, you flee from, except Allah Almighty; when you fear Him, you flee to Him. Thus, the fearful one flees from his Lord to his Lord." Abu Sulayman said: "Fear never departs from a heart without leaving it ruined." Ibrahim ibn Sufyan said: "When fear settles in the hearts, it burns away the places of desires in them and drives the world away from them." Dhu al-Nun said: "People remain on the right path as long as fear does not leave them; if fear departs from them, they go astray."

Allah Almighty praised the people of fear in His Book, saying: "Indeed, those who are apprehensive from fear of their Lord, and those who believe in the verses of their Lord, and those who do not associate anything with their Lord, and those who give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord – it is those who hasten to good deeds, and they outstrip [others] therein."

Fear (*khawf*) and reverence (*khashyah*) are two closely related terms with a slight difference in meaning: fear is general fright from anything, whereas reverence is fear and awe from something held in great esteem.

Thus, fear is for the general believers, while reverence is for the scholars and those with deep knowledge, and the degree of fear and reverence is according to the degree of knowledge and understanding.

Fear of Allah Almighty is one of the most important and greatest religious obligations due to the significant effects it entails. It is the fundamental pillar upon which a Muslim's faith is built and the path that leads to Allah Almighty.

For this reason, Allah Almighty made fear a condition of faith, as He said: "That is only Satan who frightens [you] of his supporters. So fear them not, but fear Me, if you are [indeed] believers."

In this verse, there is an obligation to fear Allah alone, and that fear is an essential part of faith. The extent of a servant's fear of Allah corresponds to the extent of his faith. Praiseworthy fear is that which prevents a servant from committing what Allah has forbidden.

Allah Almighty made part of the mission of the messengers to deliver the message and to warn, and warning is delivering a message that involves instilling fear. He said: "And We do not send the messengers except as bringers of good tidings and warners."

Accordingly, the fear that resides in the heart of a Muslim towards the Lord of the worlds is a sign of true faith. It drives the Muslim to be cautious of committing any forbidden act, to hold himself accountable, and to return to Allah. Fear is also a strong motivator for striving in righteous deeds to attain tranquility, and to reform the earth rather than corrupt it.

Here, fear of Allah Almighty is divided into two types:

- a) Fear of Allah's punishment.**
- b) Fear of Allah Himself.**

The first type is feared by the general people, as they fear entering Hellfire and fear Allah's punishment in this world and the Hereafter. They may not realize the importance of fearing Allah Himself, and their fear arises mainly when mentioning punishment, burning, and similar matters. On the other hand, the scholars and jurists who have knowledge of Allah's attributes, names, and majesty fear Allah with a stronger fear due to their awareness of His greatness and power. They prioritize the fear of Allah over the fear of His punishment and torment, and their bodies tremble at the mention of Him. This is not meant to diminish the importance of Allah's punishment and torment but rather to show the superiority and virtue of one form of fear over the other.

While this fear is commendable, there is another type of fear which is blameworthy and not praised by Sharia or reason. It is excessive fear that leads to abandoning obedience and righteous deeds. Some people, due to the severity of the warnings and their intense fear of Hellfire's punishment, fall into despair and frustration, thinking that they will not be saved from Hellfire regardless of their good deeds. This type of fear is forbidden by Sharia and condemned by scholars because it results in the opposite of what fear is intended to achieve. It does not motivate its bearer to perform righteous deeds to attain Paradise but causes them to abandon good deeds and leads them to Hellfire.

Allah Almighty says: "Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.'"

2.2.3 The Fruit of Fear

Fear has many fruits, among the most prominent are:

A. Driving the servant to sincerity in action:

Allah says: "Indeed, We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude. Indeed, We fear from our Lord a Day austere and distressful." Then He says: "So Allah protected them from the evil of that Day and gave them radiance and happiness. And He rewarded them for their patience with a garden [in Paradise] and silk."

These righteous deeds remembrance of Allah, establishing prayer, giving zakat, glorification, and others are driven by fear of the Day of Judgment. Allah says: "But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge."

This means that the one who fears being questioned by Allah on the Day of Judgment, guards Himself by fulfilling obligations and avoiding sins, restrains his desires from what Allah dislikes, and opposes his whims in obedience to his Lord, for Paradise is his final abode.

B. Recollection and distress over sins and avoidance of enjoying them:

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The believer sees his sins as if he is sitting under a mountain fearing it will fall on him, while the wicked sees his sins as a fly passing over his nose and waves it away."

Remembering sins and their consequences in the Hereafter causes distress. If adulterers were to remember Allah's warning for them on the Day of Judgment and the torment awaiting them, or even the punishment in the grave, that forbidden pleasure would be spoiled and the sin would become unpleasant. The same applies to the drinker of alcohol and other sinners. The strength of vigilance and accountability depends on the strength of fear, and the strength of fear depends on knowledge of Allah's majesty and attributes and awareness of the faults of the soul and the dangers ahead.

C. Receiving praise from Allah:

Allah praised His closest servants, the prophets, for their fear of Him, saying: “Indeed, they used to hasten to good deeds and invoke Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive.”

He also said: “Those who are apprehensive from fear of their Lord.”

And: “Or is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]? Say, ‘Are those who know equal to those who do not know?’ Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding.”

And: “And those who join that which Allah has ordered to be joined and fear their Lord and are afraid of the evil of [their] account.”

Thus, fear of Allah indicates the intelligence of its possessor, that he is among the people of understanding who know what truly causes fear and comprehend well the reasons for fear.

D. Attaining security, contentment, and entry into Paradise on the Day of Judgment:

Allah says: “Those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah,’ then remain steadfast – the angels will descend upon them, [saying], ‘Do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised.’”

And He says: “And for he who feared the position of his Lord are two gardens.”

And: “Their reward with their Lord is gardens of eternity beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. That is for whoever feared his Lord.”

E. Empowerment on earth – this is the basis of our research:

Allah says: “And those who disbelieved said to their messengers, ‘We will surely drive you out of our land, or you must return to our religion.’ So their Lord inspired to them, ‘We will surely destroy the wrongdoers. And We will surely cause you to dwell in the land after them. That is for he who fears My position and fears My threat.’”

Based on what has been mentioned, fear of Allah Almighty is the cornerstone of empowerment on earth. When we contemplate the stories of Prophet Solomon, Dhul-Qarnayn, and others, we find that Allah granted them extensive kingdoms unmatched by any others because they were righteous servants who feared Allah. They devoted their kingdoms to reforming and building the earth, and Allah made them role models for us. Allah’s provision never runs out and lasts until the Day of Resurrection. He grants power to whom He wills and takes it away from whom He wills. Only those endowed with wisdom and intellect can comprehend this truth.

3. Overcoming Fear and Attaining Strength and Empowerment**3.1 How to Overcome Fear**

After knowing that fear of Allah is the foundation upon which empowerment is built, it is necessary to understand the duration in which a servant transitions from the stage of fear to the stage of certainty, as illustrated in the story of Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh. Initially, Moses was fearful; Allah says: “They have a claim against me, and I fear that they will kill me.” And: “So he became fearful in the city, anticipating.”

When Pharaoh pursued Moses and his followers, his people told him they were doomed, but Moses replied: “No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me.”

How can we, ordinary fearful servants who have not attained prophethood, reach the stage of “No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me”?

Allah did not specify in the Qur'an the duration Moses took to reach that stage, leaving it open perhaps it was short or long. Since we ordinary humans are required to emulate the prophets and messengers with patience and steadfastness until the end, the ambiguity of the duration is a secret known only to Allah. This concealment may be to prevent people from despair and to teach that relief may come at any moment, and that certainty in reaching this stage varies among individuals according to the strength of their sincerity with Allah and their knowledge of Him. Trusting only in Allah means fully entrusting one's affairs to Him without concern for outcomes, whether good or bad, for one realizes the limitedness of one's own perception. Allah says: "And it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you, and that you like a thing which is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not."

Sometimes, it is necessary to seek evidence to verify the truth of a statement or action. Allah says: "O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful."

The danger lies in relying on oneself and one's desires, which leads to confusion and loss. Allah says: "But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination."

Whoever wants to reach the stage of "No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me" to attain strength and empowerment must free himself from fearful thoughts, seek ways to strengthen his relationship with his Lord, practice patience, study the stories of prophets, messengers, and righteous people, reflect on their lives, and avoid following the soul's desires that lead to worldly pleasures. Change begins with the reform of the heart. Allah says: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."

And He says: "Whomever Allah wants to guide, He expands his breast to Islam; and whomever He wants to misguide, He makes his breast tight and constricted as though he were climbing into the sky."

And He says: "Indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are within the breasts."

3.2 How to Attain Empowerment

One of the fruits of fear of God is empowerment on earth, victory over enemies, and inheriting their lands and dwellings. Allah Almighty has mentioned this in several places in the Holy Qur'an, including His statement:

"And those who disbelieved said to their messengers, 'Indeed, we will surely drive you out of our land, or you must return to our religion.' So their Lord inspired to them, 'We will surely destroy the wrongdoers. And We will surely cause you to dwell in the land after them. That is for he who fears My standing before Me and fears My threat.'" (Qur'an 14:13)

The phrase "We will cause you to dwell" addresses the present people, and the intended meaning includes their descendants. This indicates that Allah has made empowerment a lasting favor for His righteous servants who possess the quality of fear of God, continuing until the Day of Judgment. Allah says:

"Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security. They worship Me, not associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieves after that then those are the defiantly disobedient." (Qur'an 24:55)

Al-Tabari explained the meaning of this verse as follows:

"Allah, the Exalted, says: 'Allah has promised those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger among you' O people 'and have done righteous deeds,' meaning they obeyed Allah and His Messenger in what He commanded and forbade. 'He will grant them succession upon the earth,' meaning He will make them heirs of the land of the polytheists, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, making them its kings and rulers. 'Just as He granted it to those before them,' meaning as He did for those before them among the Children of Israel, when He destroyed the tyrants in the Levant and made the Children of Israel its kings and inhabitants. 'And He will establish for them their religion which He has

preferred for them,' meaning He will make their religion, which He favored for them, firmly established. This refers to the faith He ordained for them, commanding them with it.”

There has been some difference among the Quranic readers regarding the recitation of the phrase "just as He granted succession." Most readers pronounce it with the fathā (a), meaning Allah granted succession to those before them among the nations, while the reader ‘Āṣim reads it with the ḍamma (u) on the tā’ and kasra (i) on the lām, implying the passive form, meaning succession was granted without specifying the agent.

Similarly, the reading of "and will substitute for them" differs. Most readers, except ‘Āṣim, read it with a shadda (emphasis) on the dāl (لَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ), meaning Allah will change their state from fear to security. In Arabic, to "change" (بَدَّلَ) means to alter a condition without replacing it. Sometimes it is read with a single dāl (يُبَدِّلُ), meaning to replace something with another. The reading with the shadda here indicates the change of state rather than replacement. ‘Āṣim reads it with a single dāl (يُبَدِّلُ), aligning with the concept of replacement, which is less appropriate here.

The consensus among scholars supports the reading with the shadda, as it aligns with the meaning of changing fear to security. ‘Āṣim’s reading seems to soften the contrast between fear and security by interpreting it as a replacement rather than transformation.

Further evidence supporting this reading comes from linguistic usage: Abu al-Najm said the dismissal of a prince by another is referred to as "عزل" (removal) while the person replacing him is "مُبدل" (replaced). Regarding "they worship Me" (يَعْبُدُونِي), this means they submit in obedience and humility, not associating any partners with Allah in worship. They dedicate worship solely to Him, without any idols or other beings.

It is reported that this verse was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in response to some of his companions' complaints during times of severe fear and distress due to enemies and hardships.

From this, we conclude that the only way to attain strength, empowerment, and victory is by returning to Allah and sincerely dedicating worship and servitude to Him alone.

4. Conclusion

We have reached the conclusion of the research concerning “The Causes of Strength and Empowerment in the Light of the Holy Qur’an.” I chose this topic due to its great significance in our present time. I have endeavored, to the best of my ability, to clarify the most important and strongest causes that lead to strength and empowerment, so that people may understand and adopt them. Among the key recommendations presented are:

- Reflect deeply upon the verses that outline the causes and actions required to attain strength and empowerment.
- Possess strong determination to submit to Allah with a sincere and pure heart.
- Distance oneself from the desires of the self and fully entrust the matter to Allah.
- Review the evidences showing that human perceptions of matters are often limited and inaccurate, to increase certainty in Allah, thereby strengthening the heart with resilience, patience, and avoiding haste in matters, leading to greater awareness and wisdom in decision-making.
- Be a person of truth and justice, not oppressive or tyrannical, in order to attain strength and empowerment from Allah.
- Ensure that one’s intention is solely for the sake of Allah, avoiding ostentation and concern for reputation.

5. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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