

THE ETERNAL EXAMPLE

Steadfastness

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QUOTATIONS

O Lord, my God! Assist Thy loved ones to be firm in Thy Faith, to walk in Thy ways, to be steadfast in Thy Cause. Give them Thy grace to withstand the onslaught of self and passion, to follow the light of Divine Guidance. Thou art the Powerful, the Gracious, the Self-Subsisting, the Bestower, the Compassionate, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.

The Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Bahá

O ye that are enamoured of the divine Beauty! O ye that are enraptured by the true Beloved! In this day when the fierce gales of tests and trials have encompassed the world, and fear and trembling have agitated the planet, ye must appear above the horizon of unwavering constancy with shining faces and radiant brows in such wise that the gloom of terror and confusion may be entirely obliterated and the light of certitude may shine resplendent in the luminous skies.

From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian

*T*he consummate wisdom of God, however, is manifold and not every soul is apprised of its mysteries. Indeed, His all-encompassing mercy and His all-embracing wisdom entail certain exigencies that transcend the ken of human mind. Sorrow not, then, if trials, tribulations and adversities wax ever more severe, for the grace and bestowals of God are likewise unceasing. How often doth man flee from one thing, fixing all his hopes upon another, yet in the end it becometh apparent that the object of desire is harmful and deleterious, whereas the thing despised is the source of advantage and benefit!

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Tread, therefore, the path of acquiescence and resignation. Let no hardship sadden thy heart, nor set thy hope upon any worldly gifts. Be happy and content with whatsoever God hath willed, that thy heart and soul may find tranquillity and thine inner being and conscience may experience true joy. Erelong shall this hardship and tribulation pass away and inner peace and joy be attained.

From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian

*M*en who suffer not, attain no perfection. The plant most pruned by the gardeners is that one which, when the summer comes, will have the most beautiful blossoms and the most abundant fruit.

The labourer cuts up the earth with his plough, and from that earth comes the rich and plentiful harvest. The more a man is chastened, the greater is the harvest of spiritual virtues shown forth by him. A soldier is no good General until he has been in the front of the fiercest battle and has received the deepest wounds.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks

O thou who art turning thy face towards God! Close thine eyes to all things else, and open them to the realm of the All-Glorious. Ask whatsoever thou wishest of Him alone; seek whatsoever thou seekest from Him alone. With a look He granteth a hundred thousand hopes, with a glance He healeth a hundred thousand incurable ills, with a nod He layeth balm on every wound, with a glimpse He freeth the hearts from the shackles of grief. He doeth as He doeth, and what recourse have we? He carrieth out His Will, He ordaineth what He pleaseth. Then better for thee to bow down thy head in submission, and put thy trust in the All-Merciful Lord.

Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

*A*ffliction beat upon this captive like the heavy rains of spring, and the victories of the malevolent swept down in a relentless flood, and still 'Abdu'l-Bahá remained happy and serene, and relied on the grace of the All-Merciful. That pain, that anguish, was a paradise of all delights; those chains were the necklace of a king on a throne in heaven. Content with God's will, utterly resigned, my heart surrendered to whatever fate had in store, I was happy.

Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

*N*ow ye, as well, must certainly become my partners to some slight degree, and accept your share of tests and sorrows. But these episodes shall pass away, while that abiding glory and eternal life shall remain unchanged forever. Moreover, these afflictions shall be the cause of great advancement.

Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

*T*hou must be firm and unshakable in thy purpose, and never, never let any outward circumstances worry thee.... Let not thy heart be troubled. If thou goest away with this unchanging condition of invariability of inner state, thou shall see the doors of confirmation open before thy face, thy life will be a crown of heavenly roses, and thou shalt find thyself in the highest station of triumph.

Strive day and night to attain to this exalted state.

Attributed to Abdul-Baha to Lua Getsinger, August 19, 1913

Rest not, even for an instant, and seek not comfort, even for a moment; rather labour with heart and soul that thou mayest render devoted service to but one amongst the friends and bring happiness and joy to but one luminous heart. This is true bounty, and by it the brow of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is illumined. Be thou my partner and associate therein.

From a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—translated from the Persian

Render thanks unto God that your feet are firm and your faces, like pure gold, are aglow in the fire of tests. I beseech the one true God that day by day ye may increase in firmness and steadfastness.

From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—translated from the Persian

*H*e is the All-Glorious.

O God, my God! Thou hearest my sighs and bitter wailing, my cry and the voice of my lamentation in the depths of these darksome nights. Thou seest my abasement and lowliness, my patience and resignation, my poverty and urgent need, my anguish, my distress, my grief, and my sorrows throughout my days.

I render Thee thanks, O Lord, for this tribulation, which I deem amongst the greatest of Thy bounties and gifts, for it is endured in the path of Thy love—a love whose flames blaze within my very heart and soul. This is my wish and my hope, O my God. This is a soothing balm for my anguish, O my Best-Beloved; a cooling draught to these parched lips, O my Healer; the remover of my sorrows, O Thou Who art my Friend.

'Abdu'l-Bahá—Light of the World



STORIES

*A*siyih Khánum, the wife of Bahá'u'lláh, Bahiyyih Khánum, their lovely daughter, Munirih Khánum, the Holy Mother, and the four daughters of the Master, have never bemoaned the difficulties of their daily lives. The conditions of suffering in all the prison period called forth a superhuman patience and self-sacrifice in trying to mitigate the misery of their fellow-exiles. The fortitude of these gentle ladies never wavered in face of incredible hardships -- endured for others' good -- in that sorrow-laden time, when the days lengthened out into years of privation, where the simplest comforts of life were lacking. Radiant acquiescence met all the incredible vicissitudes of the life in 'Akká, from their arrival in 1868 to the release of 'Abdu'l-Bahá forty years later. None of these difficulties seemed to them worthy of being remembered; they were all a matter of course, even as the air they breathed; it never occurred to them to mention them;

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it is only by inference that we have glimpse into the depths of the pain which has been theirs, which has made up their laborious days. Upheld by that holy preoccupation of the spirit, its courage and its joy, they are calm and loving to all, yet aloof, dwelling consciously in that “Peace which passeth understanding” in the presence of God, in Whose path all the sufferings and persecutions, heaped upon them by uncomprehending persons, count as less than nothing. It is this attitude of theirs, this spirit, which is more arresting, more amazing, than the mere events; this spirit it is that gives the great significance, which envelops all the episodes and incidents of their existence with its radiant atmosphere.

Lady Blomfield, The Chosen Highway, p. 73-74

Haji Mirza Haydar Ali was an early and distinguished Bahá'í who was imprisoned in Egypt and Sudan for over a decade, was persecuted, tortured, and assaulted all throughout Persia for teaching the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and was known and beloved for his excellent sense of humour and sincerity.

One day, when Lua Getsinger was in 'Akká she noticed a Western woman was telling 'Abdu'l-Bahá all about her troubles. This was a strange thing to do for usually when people enter the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá they are so filled with the outpouring of His radiant love that they think only of their blessings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá with great kindness listened for half an hour to the western woman's troubles; they were really not very big troubles. At last he arose, and said he had another engagement and must be going. "But there," he said, pointing

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out of the window, “goes a man whom I will bring in to see you. His name is Mírzá Haydar-’Alí. We call him the ‘Angel of Mount Carmel’. He walks on earth but he lives in heaven. He has had many troubles and he will tell you about them.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went out, but quickly returned with Mírzá Haydar-’Alí whom he presented to the woman, and then departed.

The “Angel of Mount Carmel” with great humility and sweetness of manner began to talk with the woman of the luminous century in which we live and the divine age that is to be. She listened for a while, impatiently, and at last broke in with, “But ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said you would tell me about your troubles.” Mírzá Haydar ‘Alí looked up in amazement.

“Troubles?” he replied, “why madam, I never had any troubles, I don’t know what troubles are.”

Star of the West, vol. 22, no. 8, November 1931

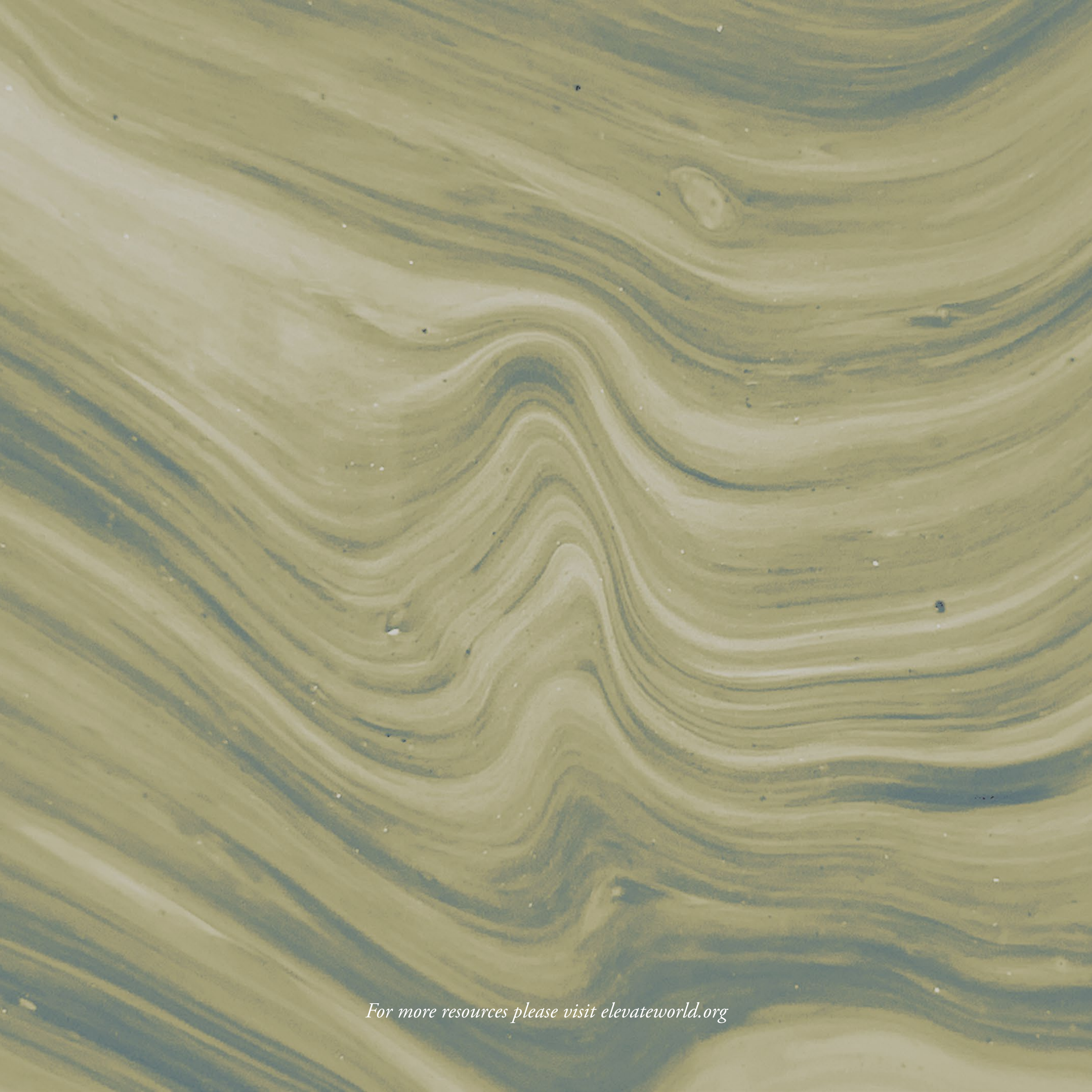


REFLECTIONS

What does the term “Radiant acquiescence” mean to you? How can this quality guide our actions and attitudes to our own difficulties?

Does accepting difficulties and tests mean that we should accept injustice or the suffering of others? How does 'Abdu'l-Bahá's example help us to navigate this question?

How can we create environments in our own neighborhoods where we can support each other through difficulties? What are some of the qualities and behaviours required?



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