Seek refuge with Allah from arduous afflictions, degrading misery, preordained evils, and from the gloating of enemies

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Seek refuge with Allah from arduous afflictions, degrading misery, preordained evils, and from the gloating of enemies." In another narration, Sufyān said: "I suspect that I added one of them."

[Authentic hadith] [Narrated by Bukhari & Muslim]

This Hadīth belongs to the category of "jawāmi‘ al-kalim": the most succinct statements of a few words that imply extensive and comprehensive meanings with great significance in implementation. The Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) sought refuge with Allah from four things. If a person is safe from these four, then he will be safe in this world and the next, and this, indeed, is the ultimate and obvious success. The four things he sought refuge from are: "Jahd al-balā’": intense afflictions and the hardships that accompany them. If trials become severe a person may not be safe from getting angry, annoyed and irritated with what Allah decreed upon him, thus he may lose the reward of the life of this world as well as in the Hereafter. "Dark ash-shaqā’": falling into utter misery. This is general, including primarily misery in the Hereafter since it is ultimate and eternal misery that will never be followed by happiness, or misery the life of this world wherein a person's state changes for the worse with time. One day may make him happy and another may make him miserable. "Sou’ al-qadā’": the preordained evils; i.e. what Allah has decreed upon the servant that the servant perceives to be bad for him. It is general regarding all the affairs in the life of this world such as wealth, children, health, wife, etc., as well as the affairs of the Hereafter. It is important to note here that the preordained evil is considered to be evil from the person's viewpoint. In reality everything that Allah preordains and decrees is good and devoid of any evil whatsoever, as in the statement of the Prophet (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) addressing Allah, the Almighty: "Evil cannot be ascribed to you." Another interpretation suggests that "sou’ al-qadā’" can mean bad judgment, i.e. that the person seeks refuge with Allah from making a bad harmful judgment and ruling. "Shamātat al-a‘dā’": rejoicing and gloating of a person's enemies at his misfortune, a cause of immense grief. The enemies of the Muslim are, in fact, the non-believers who rejoice and celebrate when Muslims dispute with each other, fight each other and humiliate themselves in whatever manner. The inclusion of the enemies of Islam as the interpretation of this Hadīth is a takes precedence over a Muslim's personal enemies (over some worldly affairs), nevertheless this meaning can be included in a secondary way. It is necessary that the Muslim who makes this supplication intends the enemies of Islam primarily then his enemies from among the Muslims secondarily (and only in a just and rightful manner). We ask Allah to make peace among the Muslims.