

Sura Qasas, verse 78

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيْتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي ۗ أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ
 مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرَ جَمْعًا ۗ وَلَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ

He said: 'I have been given this only because of the knowledge I have'. Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him of the generations those who were mightier in strength than he and greater in gathering wealth? And the guilty shall not be asked about their faults.

Reflections

- What does the reply of Qarun reveal about his attitude?
- Could he not have given a better reply? What could he have said instead?
- Richer and more powerful people than he were destroyed before him. Do you know any examples from that time? (Firaun)

Tafsir

Qarun's reply to the people who advise him is full of pride and vanity. The wealth he had made him feel superior and needless. Instead of being grateful and acknowledging God's favours, he said that the wealth was granted to him because of his own knowledge. It was as if he thought he was superior to others and that was why he had been granted wealth.

Qarun did not want the people to interfere in how he spent his money and what he did with it. He did not take the advice of others well. Believers are told to listen to those who advise them and then check themselves. If the advice is relevant and it is good for them, then they should be grateful for the advice and apply it in their lives. It is the pride and ego of a person that stops him from accepting the advice of others.

Knowledge often gives people a sense of superiority over others. When people have information in one area they think they have a complete understanding of all things and suffer from an illusion of knowledge. True knowledge is the application of knowledge in life to fulfill the purpose of life - to please God and serve His creatures. That type of knowledge leaves one with gratitude and humility.

Then Allah warns him that if he thinks he is smart and powerful there were others before him who also thought that. They were even wealthier and more powerful. But they were not able to live forever and could not protect themselves from the end that God destined for them.

Another warning in the verse is that those who disobey God will not be asked about their sins or given a chance to argue for themselves. The evidence against them will have been collected and

they will face the consequences. Presently Qarun has time to reflect over the advice of the people and can argue and discuss. But when the end comes there will be no time for that.

Useful explanations:

Pride (Kibr) - when a person feels a sense of superiority and behaves high-handedly with others. Its signs are visible in his expressions, talks, and actions. This manifestation is called *Takabbur*.
 Conceit (Ujb) - when a person has a lot of self-love and sees merit in himself. He is overcome by a sense of pleasure and exultation at himself.

Hadith

A person who possesses a speck of pride inside his heart will never enter Paradise

Holy Prophet (s)

Usul al Kafi, Vol.3, pg 423

One who humbles before Allah is raised by Him in status; and the one who is arrogant will be degraded by Allah

Holy Prophet (s)

Bihar ul Anwar

Important Lessons

- 1) Knowledge can lead to pride and vanity
- 2) Knowledge and blessings must be accompanied by gratitude and humility
- 3) Remembering death and taking lessons from those before us prevents pride and vanity
- 4) Wealth and power do not bring happiness and success
- 5) When God's decree reaches, there is no time for arguing or discussing

Practical Implementation

- 1) How do you react to knowledge?
- 2) What examples from recent history have you seen of powerful people who have fallen?

From the life of the Holy Prophet (s)

The Holy Prophet (s) disliked to see his companions stand up in his respect. Whenever he entered a gathering, he used to sit in the lowest place. He would eat sitting on the floor and used to

say, "I am a slave of God; I dine like a slave and sit in the manner proper for a slave." It has been reported from Imam al-Sadiq (A) that the Prophet (S) preferred to ride a donkey without a saddle, preferred to dine in a lowly place with the slaves, and offered alms to beggars with his own two hands. That holy personage used to ride a donkey and would sit on the mount with a slave or some other man.

It is written about him (S) that he used to share with the members of his household the duties of housework himself used to milk the sheep, stitch his own clothes and shoes, grind the flour and knead the dough, and carry his belongings himself. He liked the company of the poor and the needy and would sit to eat with them.

Story

Humility of Imam Ali (a)

One day Imam Ali (a) came out from his simple home. He walked over to his camel and rubbed its head. Imam jumped on to the saddle and nudged the camel forward. 'Let's go' he said. 'We have to move fast.'

The men working nearby saw the Imam. They looked at the Imam as he passed by. They loved and respected him. One of them decided he wanted to be with the Imam so he started following the camel. Imam was riding slowly and the man was able to run and catch up with him. He walked fast behind the camel as Imam rode. Soon some more men joined him. The group started getting bigger. Soon there was a crowd of people walking behind the Imam.

Imam heard footsteps. He heard voices chatting and laughing and the sounds seemed to be coming behind him. But it kept on following him. Surprised, he turned around. 'What are these people doing' he thought to himself. 'Why are they following me?' He stopped the camel and turned around. The men caught up with him. 'Do you need something from me?' he asked gently. 'Why are you walking and running behind me?'

The men shook their heads. One of them came forward. 'No, O Imam' he said. 'We don't need anything. We just wanted to be with you. Out of respect and love for you we decided to follow you as you rode. We like to be with you'.

The Imam frowned. He was not pleased with this display of humbleness by the people. 'Do you not know that it is wrong to walk behind someone who is riding' he explained to the people. 'It is belittling for the people who do it. And it can create pride in the rider. It is wrong both for the rider and for those behind him. Please go back.'

The men understood. Imam never liked a display of too much respect. That was meant for God only. In their hearts they respected the Imam even more. He did not demand respect as many leaders did. He just earned it without asking for it. They bid him goodbye and turned back slowly. Back to the work they had been doing.

Possible Ideas for activities

- some good examples of activities on showing the downfall of pride can be found at: <http://classroom.synonym.com/activities-teach-kids-downfall-pride-7965259.html>
- Draw a Pride cycle - where it starts, where it leads (see picture below. Note that pictures are just samples to give an idea)
- let students make a card or poster with a saying on pride, or words associated with pride. Some samples are below.



Sources:

Āytaullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirāzī (ed), *Tafsīr-e Namūneh*;

Aghae Muhsin Qaraati, *Tafsire Nur*

<https://www.al-islam.org/forty-hadith-an-exposition-second-edition-imam-khomeini/fourth-hadith-pride-kibr>