*The Story of Qarun*

*Ramadan – Ashton Central Mosque – 19/07/13*

In the name of Allah, The All-Merciful, The Ever-Merciful. All prayers and peace of Allah be upon Prophet Muhammad.

**Do You Change?**

Life changes constantly. It changes humans as well. They fluctuate between richness and poorness, glory and humility. This is life. However, do you change as well? I mean, do your ethics and morals alter? Do you remember yourself ten years ago? Do you remember how religious you were? You might have been used to sleeping with the rosary in your hands. Do you remember the ethics you said you would never give up?

Some people are steadfast in their morals, no matter how wealthy they become. Others are not. It is a hard thing, in fact, and not everyone could stand up to it. Some of the companions used to say, "We were tried by adversity and we were steadfast towards it. When we were tried with the privileges though, we were not steadfast.”

There was a time when the Prophet used to tie a rock to his abdomen out of hunger. A few years later, however, his share of the profits of war was a flock of sheep large enough to fill up the space between two mountains. A man came to him on that day and voiced his admiration of the flock. The Prophet gave it all to him instantly. The man could not believe it. When he went back to his tribe, he told them that he was with the best of people. He told them that Muhammad gives away in the manner of a man who does not fear destitute ever.

Not everyone enjoys such an attribute though. Some people lose control when life gives them so many things. It is similar to driving at a speed of 150 mph without knowing how to drive in the first place. Do you recall how you were when you used public transportation before you bought a car? Do you recall how you were when you were just a student, and now you are a prominent entrepreneur? Do you remember when you had no possessions, cars nor clothes? Are you still the same person? Some people lose their Hereafter as well as their current life because they are not able to stand the change.

**خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةَ**

"... he loses the present (life) and the Hereafter" (22:11)

That is why Allah made many poor people. Maybe had they been rich they would not have been able to cope with the challenges. Now you may understand the meaning of the ayah

**وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الأرْضِ وَلَكِنْ يُنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ**

“And if Allah were to outspread the provision for His bondmen, they would indeed be inequitable in the earth; but He sends down in a determined (estimate) whatever He decides" (42:27)

Allah knows you better than you know yourself. He knows that if you gained more you would lose your Hereafter. He loves you, so be thankful for whatever your circumstances are.

Treasuries of Allah never run out. Therefore it is not a matter of treasuries, but it is you. Being ambitious is neither wrong nor prohibited. However, ambition requires the following:

* Having a steadfast faith. Ramadan is a good opportunity for that
* Being of a good origin and good rearing
* Having a pious company that would help and tell you when you change, or a good wife/husband

This shift of attitude is the topic we are going to discuss today. We are addressing the rich and asking them whether they have changed and discarded their principles? We are all addressed today, old and young. Will the youth hearing us alter their behaviour when their circumstances change in the future?

This is a difficult task. I am not asking you not to change. I just want you to sit down and consider carefully whether you have changed over the course of your life. You could ask a friend you have known for a very long time, your wife or mother. You will benefit from understanding how people view you.

Our story is about someone who lived modestly, yet was ambitious. Later, he gained wealth, fame, and status. He was a man of ethics, and even had a mission. Nevertheless, when his life conditions improved, he gave up all the principles he previously abided by. This man was Qarun. The parables of the Qur'an act as a mirror revealing human nature.

***Qarun's Story Is Narrated In Surat Al-Qasas***

**إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى**

"Surely Qarun was of the people of Musa…" (28:76)

This ayah tells us many things. It tells us that Qarun was of the Sons of Israel, led a modest life, and was a monotheist. He was of the close followers of Musa, as the ayah says "… of the people of Musa" and not just of the Sons of Israel. The ayah said he ‘was’ of the people of Musa. Note the word 'was', which implies that he gave up his mission and people as well. Have you forgotten the people who previously surrounded you before your circumstances changed?

What happened was that Qarun could not cope with the drastic changes that took place in his life and therefore changed his behavior 180o. This matter requires unwavering hearts full of strong faith.

**فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولِي الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ**

Allah granted Qarun enormous wealth. "… And We brought him hoardings such that the (very) keys of them would indeed overburden osba (a band [of men]) endowed with power" (28:76). In Arabic, osba means 20 to 40 persons. Thus, the ayah implies that if 40 powerful men were to carry the keys of his hoardings, it would overburden them. This is in addition to his possession of palaces and lands.

**فَخَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبِدَارِهِ الأرْضَ**

“So We caved in him and his home (into) the earth” (28:81)

Do you wish to be like him? Those of you who are of a moderate financial condition, thank Allah. Have those who help you to stay on the right track by continuously giving you good advice. Feel happy that you still accept the advice. Do you have such people around you? Do you accept their words of advice? Or are you stubborn?

**Five Plunges**

**وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ**

Notice that the ayah says, “… And We brought him hoardings” (28:76). Therefore, there were many hoardings. How did Qarun obtain his wealth? The Sons of Israel were poor and the Pharaoh prevented any of their promising people of reaching any prominent positions. Therefore, whenever they found among them a promising individual, they helped him flourish. They used to buy his products and support him. He grew financially stronger through the support of his poor people. Musa was proud of him, and they all needed that financial capital to face the Pharaoh who prevented even their children from obtaining an education. Qarun grew richer, but he was still a man with a mission. He kept growing richer and things changed.

He started to monopolize the market. He doubled prices and his wealth multiplied quickly. He became **unjust** to his people, and he was able to justify his actions to himself. He enjoyed being unjust. It is as if he had an inferiority complex. No sooner he became wealthy, than he became unjust to his own people. How are things between you and your old friends? How are you with the poor?

Then came the second plunge: **arrogance.** He used to look down at his people and was claiming that Musa was going to fail them.

**إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ**

"… As his people said to him, "Do not exult; surely Allah does not love the exultant" (28:76) Being exultant in the Qur'an means arrogant. Thus, arrogance's reward is to be caved into the earth. Allah says what can be translated as, "So We caved in him and his home (into) the earth" (28:81).

By the way, those who are arrogant in this world would fall someday in the eyes of people. Imam ash-Shafi'y once said, "Do not overvalue yourself, or Allah would turn you back to your real value." The Prophet told us that whoever has an atom's weight of arrogance would not enter Jannah. He also told us that Allah revealed to him that people should be humble. People should not vie in glory with one another, nor mock one another. He also told us that whoever shows humbleness to Allah He will elevate him.

Before we delve into the third plunge please ask yourself whether you have changed. Have you ever seen Qarun’s story from this perspective? That it is the story of those whom Allah gave them wealth and as a result they gave up their values? To recap, the first plunge was that Qarun was **inequitable** to his people, and the second was that he became **arrogant.** He began to view himself as an aristocrat and not one of the regular people and that is when he had the third plunge. Note that Musa was not involved until that point and was only observing things.

Qarun was no longer part of the mission, and the wise men started to talk to him. They said, "Do not exult; surely Allah does not love the exultant". They then said

**وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الآخِرَةَ وَلا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الأرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ**

“And seek, in whatever Allah has brought you, the Last Home” (28:77). Therefore, they started to remind him of the message of Allah for which he used to claim that he acquired the money. The ayah also says, what can be translated as, “…and do not forget your assignment of the present (life); and be fair (to others) as Allah has been fair to you. And do not inequitably seek to work corruption in the land; surely Allah does not love the corruptors” (28:77). Their advice was very balanced.

When Qarun's wealth increased, he strived for more. He started to earn money through unlawful ways, such as monopoly and establishing amusement centres, in which the Sons of Israel would work. It brought him much wealth. It is just like the satellite channels that show dancing and other things that corrupt the youth. They make a great deal of money.

Thus, Qarun's third plunge is that he abandoned his mission of reform and undertook one of corruption. He worked on inciting their lusts.

To every father marrying off his daughter, do not be overjoyed with the fortune of the suitor, but rather ask him first where he obtained it from. Do not ever feed your children from unlawful provision. For those who are living modestly, do not increase your wealth through unlawful means. For then, Allah would never love you no matter how much you pray.

Qarun replied to the advice of his people by saying:

**قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي**

"This has been given to me only because of knowledge I possess" (28:78). He negated not only his people’s support, but Allah's grace over him. Many people make the same mistake. They forget the grace of Allah towards them. Therefore, in the rest of the ayah there is a strong comment:

**أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا وَلا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ**

"And did he not know that Allah had already caused to perish, even before him, of the generations, (men) who were stronger than he in power and more multiplying in (heaping) together?" (28:78).

This brings us to the fourth plunge,

**وَلا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ**

"… And the criminals will not be questioned for their guilty (deeds)" (28:78). He is a criminal. Criminals refuse advice and those who point out their faults. He abandoned anybody who could be his mentor. This is wrong. Everybody should have a mentor to resort to. I myself, always search for a mentor to evaluate my speeches. I listen to them when they advise me. You too, young people, should find your mentor.

Do you see now how miraculous the Qur'an is? It tells us many things about ourselves. Therefore, you should read the Qur'an a lot and understand it so you can feel the meaning of this ayah,

**وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَّكِرٍ**

 "And indeed We have already made the Qur'an easy for remembrance. Is there then any that will recollect?" (54:17). Allah will make facilitate it for you. A third of the Qur'an is comprised of stories, why do you not learn from them?

Now, Qarun is about to plunge for the fifth time. This one is the worst. **Qarun wants to keep his wealth**, whereas the Pharaoh would not let any of the Sons of Israel keep their wealth. The only solution he had was to collaborate with the Pharaoh against Musa. Qarun arranged with the Pharaoh to stir discord amongst the Sons of Israel in return for keeping his wealth.

At the time, Musa was confronting the Pharaoh, and there was the incidence of the stick turning into a snake and Musa’s victory over the magicians. The Pharaoh believed that Qarun would be effective in stirring Musa’s community as he had abundant wealth. There are ayahs that imply that Qarun had joined forces with the Pharaoh,

**وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَقَارُونَ فَقَالُوا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ**

“And indeed We already sent Mu‍sa (Moses) with Our signs and an evident all-binding authority. To Firaawn, (Pharaoh) and Haman, and Qaru‍n. Yet they said, “A sorcerer, a constant liar”” (40:23-24)

**وَقَارُونَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الأرْضِ وَمَا كَانُوا سَابِقِينَ (٣٩)فَكُلا أَخَذْنَا بِذَنْبِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الأرْضَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَغْرَقْنَا وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ**

“And Qaru‍n and Firaawn (Pharaoh) and Haman- and indeed Musa already came to them with the supreme evidence(s), yet they waxed proud in the land, and in no way were they forerunners (i.e., they were not the first people to disbelieve). Then We took each one for his guilty (deed); so of them was he on whom We sent (a squall of) gravel and (some) whom the Shout took (away), and of them was he who was caved in (into) the earth, and some We drowned. And in no way, indeed, did Allah do (any) injustice to them, but they did injustice to themselves” (29:39-40).

Qarun and the Pharaoh agreed that Qarun would stir commotion on two fronts; one regarding Musa, and the other the people of Israel themselves. Regarding Musa, Qarun incited a prostitute to claim that Musa committed adultery. When she announced that, Musa kept performing dua’a to Allah to show people the truth, and to guide that woman's heart so that she would speak the truth. She heard his dua’a and cried, repented, and revealed that Qarun was the inciter.

As for what he did regarding the Sons of Israel, he convinced Pharaoh that he – Qarun - would go out to his people in his adornment and give them of his wealth, as if to say I have what can be offered as opposed to Musa who has only a message. The discord was stirred amongst the Sons of Israel.

**فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا يَا لَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَارُونُ إِنَّهُ لَذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ**

"So he went out to his people in his adornment. The ones who would like (to gain) the present life said, "Oh, would that we had the like of what Qarun has been brought! Surely he is indeed an owner of a tremendous fortune." (28:79).

The noble Qur'an depicts the selves of people. These selves exist in all times. However, those people should have asked two questions: was Qarun happy? What was the price he paid to achieve what he had? Then the conflict began to rise amongst the Sons of Israel.

**وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيْلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِمَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَلا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلا الصَّابِرُونَ**

"And the ones to whom knowledge was brought said, "Woe to you! The requital of Allah is more charitable (i.e., better) for him who believes and does righteousness; and none will be granted (Literally: made to receive) except the patient” (28:80)

***Two Notes***

There are two points I want to mention. First, I am sure that Qarun had never contemplated his situation. Therefore, please ask yourself, what do you want? Is it Allah? Gather your strength and confront yourself. Do not give yourself excuses by claiming that you have no time for the confrontation.

The second point I want to emphasize is that you must not give up your credit of ethics to increase your credit at the bank. The Prophet taught us that the bankrupt is the one who would come on the Day of Judgment, and he had insulted so and so, beaten so and so, and took the money of so and so. Then each one of those whom were aggressed upon would take from his good deeds.

***The Ending***

There was no hope for reforming Qarun. He became so harmful for Musa's mission. He became even more dangerous than the Pharaoh himself, because of the discord he stirred amongst the Sons of Israel. Thus, the end was,

**فَخَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبِدَارِهِ الأرْضَ**

"So We caved in him and his home (into) the earth" (28:81)

His knowledge was useless then. Even his treasures were swallowed into the earth because they were of unlawful sources. Thus, the story of Qarun ended so quickly, so simply, and precisely. Everything was gone. This is what should be addressed to the wealthy people. As for the less wealthy,

**وَأَصْبَحَ الَّذِينَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهُ بِالأمْسِ يَقُولُونَ وَيْكَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَوْلا أَنْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا وَيْكَأَنَّهُ لا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ**

"they said after what they had seen, "And (in the morning) the ones who had coveted his place the day before became (secure) and said, "Ah, actually (Or: Now, it seems true that) Allah outspreads the provision to whomever He decides of His bondmen, and He estimates it. Had Allah not been Bounteous to us, He would indeed have caved us in. Ah, actually the disbelievers do not prosper." (28:82)

They came to understand the reason why some people are rich while others are not.

You see the beauty of the Qur'an. Whoever reads it believes in it and senses its beauty. They would think over their situation and thank Allah for what He blesses them with.

The story has ended. Remember that every story in the Qur'an has a concluding ayah.

**تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الأرْضِ وَلا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ**

"That is the Last Home. We make it for the ones who would not like exaltation in the earth nor corruption, and the (fortunate) End is for the pious" (28:83

It means that those who pursue the Jannah should be free of two characteristics: arrogance and corruption.

Omar Ibn-Abdul-Aziz used to recite this ayah and live by it. He was afraid of becoming a tyrant. On his deathbed, he smiled. They asked him for the reason so he replied with this ayah and then he died. It was the last thing he uttered. He lived, ruled, and died by it.

At the end, if you are rich, then be careful. If you are living modestly, then praise Allah. If you wish to become rich then you should do the following:

* Search for a good company (friends, husband)
* Search for a good wife, of a good origin, so that she would help you to raise your children righteously
* Do not forget to perform the acts of worship especially in Ramadan.