

Introduction –We continue our studies in the Book of Psalms, focusing on some of the Psalms which the Levite choirs composed and sang: not only for the enrichment of the worship of David’s day, but for our own enrichment today.

Monday: read Psalm 42:1 and Numbers 26:10-11. Psalm 42’s title introduces us to our first character study from those who served in the Temple, namely, the “sons of Korah.” Korah, called a son of Kohath and Levi in Num. 16:1, is infamous as one of the rebels whom the ground “swallowed up” (Numbers 26:10). But Numbers 26:11 tells us that Korah’s line “did not die out,” which must mean that some of Korah’s family obeyed Moses’ command to separate from their father Korah in Numbers 16:26 and thus were spared. Even in the midst of judgment, God’s grace effectively called these “sons of Korah” to follow Him!

Meditate and Pray: How wonderful to see God’s arm of salvation snatch these sons of Korah from the doom of their father, turning his shameful uprising into their monument of grace. Behold the wonder of election for these “sons of Korah”: numbered among those who entered the Promised Land, and then called by David to serve as his official singers. This is all the more remarkable, I say again, considering that their father, Korah, turned out to be a “vessel of wrath prepared for destruction” (Rom. 9:22). How is it that God can bring such pure election out of the unclean rebellion of Korah and bring a “monument to grace” out of what was meant to be a “warning sign” (Num. 26:10)? Well, that is the glory – and the mystery – of God’s particular grace, which all believers are to confess with humble gratitude. As hymn # 469, verses 3 & 4, put it:

*Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there’s room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?*

*’Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly drew us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.*

Tuesday: read Psalm 42:1 and 1 Chronicles 6:33-38. More amazing discoveries about the “sons of Korah” await us today. Notice in 1 Chronicles 6:33-34 that Samuel and his father Elkanah are included as the descendants of Korah and the forebears of that great chief singer for David, mentioned in verse 33, Heman. Yes, can you believe it, all these mightily used men of God – golden-voiced Heman, and before him, Elkanah, the husband of Hannah, and even Samuel, their son and the great prophet of God, whose words God did not let “fall to the ground” (1 Samuel 3:19) – all identified in 1 Chronicles 6:37 as “sons of Korah.”

Meditate and Pray: Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, indeed! Sing of this undeserved, electing grace in hymn # 471 in our hymnals:

*’Tis not that I did choose Thee,
For Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee,
Hadst Thou not chosen me.
Thou from the sin that stained me
Hast cleansed and set me free;
Of old Thou hast ordained me,
That I should live to Thee.*

*’Twas sov’ reign mercy called me
And taught my op’ning mind;
The world had else enthralled me,
To heav’nly glories blind.
My heart owns none before Thee,
For Thy rich grace I thirst;
This knowing, if I love Thee,
Thou must have loved me first.*

Wednesday: read Psalm 42:1 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. One last question from the title of Psalm 42: “If such famous, godly ancestors as Heman, David’s great singer, and Samuel, the great prophet, are all from this singing family, why not change the title of the Psalm from “the sons of Korah” to the “sons of Samuel” or “sons of Heman”? What bad publicity to name yourselves “the sons of Korah”! Hardly a name you would choose for your travelling choir! But you see, the Bible always does this: emphasizing the grace of election by using names of weakness and even shame for God’s people. Go, for example, to the prophecy of Isaiah, and see how many times the nation Israel is referred to by the name of that twister “Jacob”! See how the greatest king Israel ever had is best known, in terms of *his* songs, for Psalm 51, where he goes public with his heinous sin against God, Uriah and Bathsheba and *even* sings about his being “conceived in sin” (Ps. 51:5)!

Meditate and Pray: “Lord, in the midst of all our accomplishments, let us resolve to give God all the glory of our salvation, and let us be content to be known, to the end of our days, as those among ‘the chief of sinners’! Amen.”

Thursday: read Psalm 42:1-4 and Numbers 16:26-27. Let us learn two last lessons from the history of the “sons of Korah.” First, as we examine how these “sons of Korah” were spared, we are taught that it is never too late to plead with and admonish men to “flee the coming wrath.” The most hardened defectors from God’s cause may unexpectedly respond to the last call of grace, even as the kin of Korah moved away from his tents in Numbers 16:27. Second, imagine the loyalty of these saved sons of Korah to God’s cause. Imagine the gratitude which would permeate all their works around God’s House! How did Jesus put it? “He who is forgiven much, loves much.” No wonder there is such a love for God’s house in Psalm 42:2-4, and a desire to meet with and rejoice in God in His house of worship!

Meditate and Pray: “Lord, remind us of the deep, abiding grace shown to us in Jesus Christ. Give us a whole-hearted joy in ‘offering up our bodies as living sacrifices,’ as we, with the help of Psalm 42, have a fresh view of your mercies! Most important, make us to be dedicated servants in your house, loving the place of thine abode. Amen.”

Friday: read Psalm 42:1-5. The sons of Korah, though they were famous musicians and choir leaders among God’s people, were, nevertheless, unashamed to express their own broken-hearted longing for God, thereby identifying with God’s people in all ages in their sufferings. Psalm 42 is, after all, a “Psalm of Lament” in which the sons of Korah thirst after the intimate closeness with God which they have lost (Ps. 42:1-3), and for which they are mocked by those who say, “Where is your God?” Listen to fellow OPC pastor Ed Cathey, as he describes what these “Psalms of Lament” involved:

“Laments reckon with a world that is not harmonious... In the laments the psalmist is out of sorts and confused. Something is not right in his world. He feels abandoned and threatened. God’s promises appear to be in jeopardy ... God often seems unaware of the crisis or unconcerned about it.”

Meditate and Pray: Have you ever felt that God's will seems hidden in your life? Does the moral order in your world seem threatened? Does life seem to hold - instead of abundance - scarcity, sickness and death? What a comfort not to be alone at such a time and to be able to sing with the greatest choir of Israel about our troubles, by means of this God-inspired lament! Surely there is great help for us at our lowest times. Would God ever provide us such songs of lament to sing *without at the same time* planning to rescue us from those times? No, as soon as we begin to sing these laments, we know that deliverance will indeed come... sooner than we had thought! Sing these words from Psalm 42 (# 662) with new appreciation of the trials which "the sons of Korah" endured in order to bring these words to us:

*As the hart longs for flowing streams
So longs my soul for You O God
My soul does thirst for the living God
When shall I come to see Your face?*

*My tears have fed me day and night
while men have said "Where is your God?"
But I recall as my soul pours dry
The days of praise within Your house.*

*Why do I mourn and toil within
When it is mine to hope in God?
I shall again sing praise to Him
He is my help, He is my God.*