

David is considered to be the author of many of the Psalms in the first half of the Psalter to which we turn this week. Painting with a very broad brush, Psalms 1-41 are David's personal sufferings as God's anointed king. We see him in this first book of Psalms battling enemies personally – whether his traitorous son Absalom (Psalms 3) or King Saul's henchman Cush (Psalm 7). Psalms 42-72 focus on the trials and triumphs which David the king *shares* with His appointed music leaders, choir directors and temple Levites. If the king suffered for God, then so did his priesthood! In this second section, the first 8 Psalms (42-49) are composed by one group of musicians who served in the tabernacle of David's day, the "Sons of Korah," who sing often with a voice of lament. This week we focus on some of the Psalms which these Levite choirs composed and sang, not only for their value in David's day, but for our own comfort and worship. May they lift and cheer our hearts.

Monday: Read Psalm 42:1 and Numbers 26:10-11

The Sons of Korah

Psalm 42's title introduces us to a group who served in the Temple and shared the worship of God with their king, David. They are the Sons of Korah. Korah, 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 (Numbers 16:26) and thus were spared. Even in the midst of judgment, God's grace effectively called "sons of Korah" to follow Him! This is the glory – and the mystery – of God's particular grace, which all believers are to confess with humble gratitude.

Meditate and Pray: Hymn # 469, verses 3 & 4:

*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

Bad Publicity

Why did the Sons of Korah publicize themselves as descended from this infamous ancestor? There were other famous and much better respected sires in their family tree. For example, godly ancestors like Heman, David's great singer and author of Psalm 88, and Samuel the great prophet - both are from this singing family of the Sons of Korah (1 Chronicles 6:33-34). Why not change the title of your Psalms from The Sons of Korah to the Sons of Samuel? What bad publicity to name yourselves The Sons of Korah! The Bible often emphasizes 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. Or see how the greatest king Israel is best known, in terms of *his* songs, for Psalm 51, where he goes public with his heinous sin of adultery, and *even* sings about his being "conceived in sin" (Ps. 51:5)!

Meditate and Pray: Consider your own infamous ancestors and thank God from delivering you from their fate of godlessness.

Wednesday: Read Psalm 42:1-5**Lament to the Lord**

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 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.*

Thursday: Read Psalm 44:4-26 and Job 19:23-25**The Last Word**

In the midst of lamentable situations where we cry out for God to arise, as the sons of Korah do in Psalm 44:23 & 26, we can feel lost and disregarded by God. Yet we must hold on to the promise in Psalm 44:4, that God will have the last word in our trials as our King and God. He alone has stretched forth His arm to redeem us; He alone paid the price of delivering us out of the Egypt of sin and death; He alone has baptized us into Christ's death and resurrection! He has too much invested in us to allow the enemy to destroy us. No – we must ask God to give us the strength to see by faith that our redeemer is victorious and able to save us in the end, just as Job 19:25 promises: *For I am sure that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand **the last** on the earth.* (**Geneva Bible**)

Does this mean we will see *in this life* death defeated, sin and Satan expunged from the creation and all sorrow done away with? The Bible does not promise Heaven on earth in that way. But the Bible *does promise* that we will **not** be forsaken even when the foundations of the earth are destroyed.

Meditate and Pray: As hymn # 40, paraphrasing Psalm 46, puts it in our *Trinity Hymnal*:

*God is our Refuge and our Strength,
Our ever present Aid,
And, therefore, though the earth remove,
We will not be afraid;
Though hills amidst the sea be cast,
Though foaming waters roar,
Yes, though the mighty billows shake
The mountains on the shore.*

*The nations raged, the kingdoms moved,
But when His voice was heard
The troubled earth was stilled to peace
Before His mighty Word.
The Lord of Hosts is on our side,
Our safety is secure;
The God of Jacob is for us
A refuge strong and sure.*

Friday: Read Psalm 46:1-7

Peace Amidst Disaster

Our last Psalm by the Sons of Korah reminds us that the heart of our survival by faith is the peace which God gives us as His embattled, persecuted people, so that we find the strength to cry out to Him when all around is dark and in tumult. He gives us the confidence that, *though in this world all hopes may be dashed*, there is nothing which disturbs the unchanging goodness and glory of God on His throne. To put it in terms of the poetic structure of Psalm 46: Though the “earth gives way” in verse 2-3, with “mountains falling into the heart of the sea, waters roaring and mountains quaking with their surging...”, though nations are in an uproar “with falling kingdoms and a melting earth,” yet we find God on His throne, and His scepter exercising perfect control over the wicked hearts, plans and actions of mankind.

Meditate and Pray: No wonder hymn # 40 continues from yesterday with these words, picking up verses 4-5’s picture of Heavenly peace:

*A river flows whose streams make glad
The city of our God,
The holy place wherein the Lord
Most High has His abode;
Since God is in the midst of her,
Unmoved her walls shall stand,
For God will be her early help,
When trouble is at hand.*

*Be still and know that I am God,
O’er all exalted high;
The subject nations of the earth
My Name shall magnify.
The Lord of Hosts is on our side,
Our safety is secure;
The God of Jacob is for us
A refuge strong and sure.*