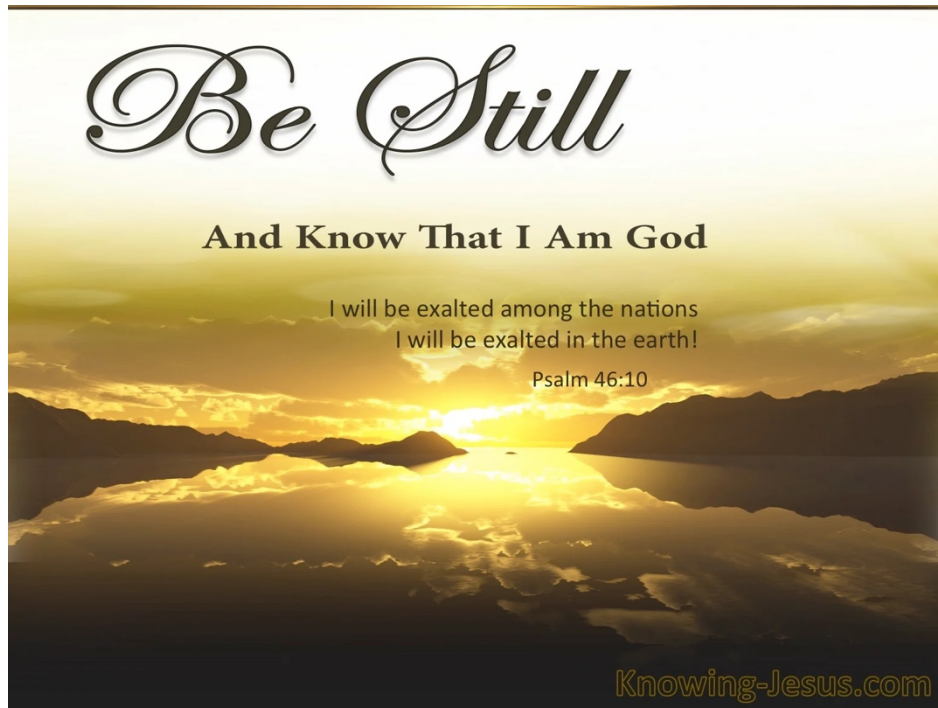


PSALMS OF THE SONS OF KORAH
INTRODUCTION AND
OVERVIEW



T. M. and Susie Moore

A Scriptorium Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Psalms of the Sons of Korah: Introduction and Overview

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Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing

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Introduction to the Psalms of the Sons of Korah

People frequently assume that all the psalms were written by David. They are surprised to know that various other composers were involved in that great work, including Moses, Solomon, Asaph, and the sons of Korah.

The sons of Korah are particularly interesting as psalm writers, since their primary vocation was more practical than liturgical. But the twelve psalms they composed are deeply personal, filled with beauty and majesty, and focused on the sovereign greatness of God.

In this study we're going to walk through all twelve of these psalms, studying, meditating, reflecting, praying, and singing the psalms of the sons of Korah, that we may gain as much as possible of the benefit they intended for us.

We begin our study with an introduction to the sons of Korah and an overview of their corpus.

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May the Lord bless your work in this study, that you may grow to know Him better, love Him more, and serve Him more joyfully.

T. M. and Susie Moore

1 Rather Be a Gatekeeper

Opening Prayer: Psalm 84.8-12

O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
Give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*
O God, behold our shield,
And look upon the face of Your anointed.
For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly.
O LORD of hosts,
Blessed is the man who trusts in You!

Sing Psalm 84.8-12

(Holy Manna: [*Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*](#))

Lord of hosts, my prayer receiving, hear me, help me by Your grace!
In Your courts I stand believing; Turn to me Your glorious face!
Lord, our sun, our shield, our glory, no good thing will You deny
To those who proclaim Your story, and who on Your grace rely.

Read 1 Chronicles 26.1, 12-19

Preparation

1. What work did God appoint for the sons of Korah?
2. What does this seem to have involved?

Meditation

To be a gatekeeper in ancient Israel was an honorable and important work.

We begin a series of studies on the psalms composed by the sons of Korah, who were gatekeepers in the temple of the Lord. Thus, we understand that they began their ministry when Solomon was king, during a time when Israel was in her glory as the envy of the nations for wisdom and wealth (cf. 1 Kgs. 10). Central to the greatness of the nation was the magnificent temple which Solomon constructed on the hill of Zion in the heart of Jerusalem. It was a wonder of the world, and it was the duty of all who served there, in whatever capacity, to keep it that way.

What do we know about these gatekeepers? They were chosen from two families of Levites, the sons of Merari and the sons of Korah (v. 19). Thus, their service would have been of a practical and managerial nature in the temple, since this was the kind of work appointed the Levites from the beginning. Such work would require a certain raft of skills that not everyone in Israel possessed. The gatekeepers had to be “able men” (1 Chron. 26.7) “with strength for the work” (1 Chron. 26.8). As guards of the entrances to the temple, they would have been fit, imposing, and well-equipped to protect against any interlopers who sought unlawful entrance. They doubtless possessed considerable organizational skills, because they set up teams of gatekeepers for different watches of the day and night (1 Chron. 26.12) and different gates into the temple (1 Chron. 26.13). They would have been very disciplined, able to keep a strict schedule and order for guarding, opening, and securing the gates. Think of the Beefeaters outside the queen’s palace in London, or the American service persons who guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington. Promptness.

Protocol. Checklists. Teamwork. Attention to detail. Pride. Respect.

No wonder the sons of Korah would rather have been gatekeepers in the house of the Lord than enjoy the footloose life of wickedness. For them a day serving the Lord within the courts of the temple was better than a thousand days doing anything else (Ps. 84.10). Wouldn't we like to be able to say the same?

The sons of Korah must have been a close-knit, self-effacing, deeply spiritual, and uniquely gifted band of brothers. They cared not for individual fame or recognition, but only that together they might glorify God. The eleven (and probably twelve) psalms credited to them are some of the most personal, visionary, and glorious of all the psalms in the psalter, and in this study, we're going to take a close look at each of them.

We begin in our next installment with a survey of the themes common to each of the psalms of the sons of Korah.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

As with many words, a variety of synonyms can be found. Gatekeeper is no exception. Porter, doorkeeper, doorman, temple guard, and doorman of the temple are all interchangeable. Each one signifies and elaborates on the work to which the sons of Korah were called.

A gatekeeper is a person who controls access to something and assesses who is "in or out". A porter has an added dimension as a person stationed at a door or gate to admit or assist those entering. A doorman includes a uniform on the person or attendant at the entrance of a building. And a guard is a person assigned to protect or oversee another; or a sentinel on duty to protect or defend.

These sons of Korah were an amazing group of men who not only had the important job of gatekeeper of the temple of God, but were poets and songwriters, too. They also were unafraid to speak truth to power. Indeed, they were a "uniquely gifted band of brothers" who "cared not for individual fame or recognition, but only that together they might glorify God."

They exemplified the "chief end of man" as stated in the *Catechism*, "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever".

Let us agree together, with the gatekeeping sons of Korah, to follow Jesus' command to "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5.16).

Because really, there is nowhere we'd rather be and nothing we'd rather do!

Reflection

1. What is your sense of what these gatekeepers were supposed to do? Is there any sense in which we who believe are gatekeepers of the Kingdom? Explain.
2. All work is honorable and important when it is done unto the Lord. What would you say are some of the keys to do all things unto the Lord, including our work (Col. 3.23, 24)?
3. Given their work as gatekeepers, what kinds of themes might you expect from the twelve psalms of the sons of Korah?

There were four divisions of the gatekeepers, but they came from only two of the Levitical clans, Kohath and Merari...Like their Levitical brethren in music (1 Chron. 25:7) and the priests (24:31), these officials served right along with the four thousand others who made up the whole contingent of gatekeepers (23:5). Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Notes on 1 Chronicles 26.1-19

From Egypt to Moab: Deuteronomy 1, 2

Closing Prayer: Psalm 84.1-7

Commit yourself to the Lord as a living sacrifice for this day. Call on Him to prepare you for the journey ahead, and to help you keep your eyes on Him and His glory as you go.

Psalm 84.1-7

(Holy Manna: [*Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*](#))

Lord of hosts, how sweet Your dwelling; how my soul longs for Your courts!

Let my soul with joy keep telling of Your grace forever more.

Like a bird upon the alter, let my life to You belong.

Blessed are they who never falter as they praise Your grace with song!

Blessed are they whose strength is founded in Your strength, O Lord above.

All whose hearts in You are grounded journey in Your strength and love.

Though they weep with tears of sadness, grace shall all their way sustain.

In Your presence, filled with gladness, they shall conquer all their pain.

2 The Greatness of God

Opening Prayer: Psalm 47.1, 2

Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!
For the LORD Most High *is* awesome;
He is a great King over all the earth.

Sing Psalm 47.1, 2

(Truro: [*Shout for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

O clap your hands, you peoples all; with joy to God your songs intone!
Shout out to Him, and on Him call: He is the mighty, sovereign One!

Read Psalm 47

Preparation

1. How do the sons of Korah describe the greatness of God?
2. How do the nations respond to God's greatness?

Meditation

We begin our brief survey of the primary themes in the psalms composed by the sons of Korah with their focus on the greatness of God. God and His greatness – personal, royal, holy, and saving – is foundational to all twelve of these psalms. It provides the interpretive focus for gaining the benefit these temple gatekeepers intended.

Psalm 47 sets the tone of this theme: “For the LORD Most High *is* awesome...a great King over all the earth” (v. 2). God “has gone up with a shout” (v. 5), which clearly points to the ascension of Christ as King and Lord of all (cf. Ps. 110, Dan. 7.9-14). This theme is reinforced in Psalm 45.6, 7, where the sons of Korah envision Christ ruling with a “scepter of uprightness” over His Kingdom (cf. Heb. 1.8).

God is “greatly to be praised” in His city, where He is the “great King”, and all the nations scatter in fear before His Presence (Ps. 48.1-6). He is exalted over all the nations and will be exalted throughout the whole earth (Ps. 46.10), until all the peoples (Hebrew: אַמִּים, *ammim*, “peoples”) praise His great and holy Name forever and ever (Ps. 45.17). From His throne on high, God is “a sun and a shield” for His people, from whom He does not withhold anything which is for their good (Ps. 84.11).

Not even His own Son (Ps. 88). The sons of Korah could not see clearly through to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rather, they saw as much as God chose to reveal to them of His greatness, much of which, as the story of redemption unfolded, came to fullest expression in Jesus and His Kingdom. This theme of the greatness of God and how His people experience this recurs throughout the psalms of the sons of Korah, and it keeps us oriented to the things that are above, where Christ is, seated in heavenly places at the right hand of God (Col. 3.1-3).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding” (Psa. 47. 7).

The sons of Korah want us to understand the greatness of God. However, we are not to lean on our own understanding (Prov. 3.5). Paul, in his guidance to Timothy said, “...may the Lord give you understanding in all things” (2 Tim. 2.7). True understanding comes directly from God. And James suggests that “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him”

(Jms. 1.5).

As God gives us wisdom and understanding we begin to see His awesomeness. “And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—‘The LORD is one,’ and His name one” (Zech. 14.9).

And ultimately, “The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Rev. 11.15).

That “...the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raise Him from the dead...” (Eph. 1.17-20).

The Greatness of God. “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (Ps. 119.18). Let us praise Him with the understanding that He gives us through His word.

Reflection

1. Why do we need to know how great, how majestic, how strong, wise, faithful, and beautiful God is? Do you ever want to shout His greatness?

2. What is God’s plan for getting the peoples of the world to praise Him? What is your role in that plan?

3. How can the Word of God help us to grow in understanding the greatness of God?

“Shout to God,” that is, offer thanksgiving to him, the victory to him, the trophy to him. The conflict is not human or the battle physical, nor is the contest over any earthly concern but over the heavens and those in the heavens. He personally conducted this war and gave us a share in the victory. John Chrysostom (344-407), *Commentary on the Psalms* 47.1, 2

Closing Prayer: Psalm 47.2-9

Praise God for His greatness, His Kingdom, His faithfulness, goodness, and love. Commit yourself and your day to the service of our great God.

Sing Psalm 47.2-9

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

High is the Lord, O, fear His Name! He rules, a King o’er all the earth.

Nations and peoples He has tamed, the heritage of His holy worth.

God has ascended with a shout, the Lord with sound of trumpet bold!

Sing praise to Him, let praise ring out! Let praise through all the world be told!

God is the King of all the earth, sing praise to Him with glorious psalms!

He rules the nations by His worth, and on His throne receives their alms.

Princes of peoples gather all to Abraham and to our God.

Exalt the Lord, and on Him call – the earth is His, so praise our God!

3 The Dwelling Place of God

Opening Prayer: Psalm 48.1-3

Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God,
In His holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation,
The joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion *on* the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.
God is in her palaces;
He is known as her refuge.

Sing Psalm 48.1-3

(Cwm Rhondda: [*Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*](#))

Great is God, now greatly praise Him in the city of the Lord.
Holy she, His lovely mountain, great and glorious by His Word!
God her King is great within her, He, her Stronghold ever sure!
He, her Stronghold ever sure!

Read Psalm 84

Preparation

1. Where were the psalmists going in this psalm?
2. How did they describe themselves?

Meditation

It stands to reason that a great God would have a great and glorious dwelling place.

The sons of Korah lived and worked in the dwelling place of God, in Jerusalem and on Mt. Zion and in the temple. The temple Solomon constructed was a place of magnificence and glory. It was indeed a lovely place to work (Ps. 84.1). It bore witness to the greatness of God in its intricate carvings, grand structures, gleaming tools and furnishings, splendid surroundings, and careful protocols and rites. The temple said to the world that the God Who lives here is a great God, indeed.

We see this especially in Psalm 45, where the beauty of God's dwelling place is spelled out for us to see, hear, and even smell, in all its beauty and glory.

The dwelling place of God was for the sons of Korah a refuge, a city refreshed by the constant, flowing Presence of God, firmly established and filled with holiness (Ps. 46.4, 5; cf. Ps. 1, Jn. 7.37-39). Glorious things were spoken of the dwelling place of God, His temple, city, and people (Ps. 87.1-3). From the dwelling place of God, beauty, holiness, and joy radiated to the world, to the praise of His Name, the rejoicing of His people, and the great chagrin of His enemies (Ps. 48.1-7).

So glorious, powerful, magnificent, majestic, and imposing was the dwelling place of God to the sons of Korah, that when they considered it, they thought of God Himself, ever present with His people and guiding them into the fullness of His promises (Ps. 48.12-14).

Believers in Jesus Christ are the dwelling place of God, from whom His glory is to radiate to the world. The more we contemplate Him, dwelling at the Father's right hand, and yield to Him, dwelling in us by His Spirit,

the more the world will be filled with Jesus and through Him, with the knowledge of God's glory. Yes, the sons of Korah will provide much help for us in thinking about what it means to be the dwelling place of God.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

In the Old Testament, God's dwelling place, both the traveling tabernacle and the temple, were places of beauty and majesty. Even the portability of the tabernacle did not impede its glory.

In the New Testament, churches both in homes and buildings, showed their beauty, holiness, and majesty through their constituency. The people. Us.

God gives us guidelines, as little mobile cathedrals, on how to function properly. His Law, His Word, the life of Jesus, the lives of His prophets and apostles, the lives of His saints, all bear witness to the way this cathedral should roll. And we need to follow the pattern set before us.

Yes, it is a big task. Yes, we have been called to it. And yes, God is willing and able to make it happen! "...do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6.19, 20).

"...keep yourselves in the love of God..." as you are His dwelling place. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen" (Jude 21, 24, 25).

Reflection

1. Why does the New Testament refer to both the believer and the church as the dwelling place of the Lord? What makes us as believers God's dwelling place?
2. Since God is great and beautiful, filled with joy and gladness, what should we expect His dwelling place to be like? What can you do to become more like this?
3. In a sense, believers are gatekeepers into the dwelling place of God. Explain.

Notice all that the verse implies: I long, O Lord, for your eternal dwelling places; my soul yearns and pines for the courts of the Lord; I long for some place to dwell, a nest for my soul and my body. The birds that fly about to and fro with no restraint, nevertheless, after their flight, have a place and a nest in which to rest. How much more ought not my body and soul procure for itself a resting place? Jerome (347-420), Homilies on the Psalms 16

Closing Prayer: Psalm 48.4-14

Thank God for the Church, and for your church. Pray for the leaders and members of your church, that they might desire what God desires for you as a congregation.

Sing Psalm 48.4-14

(Cwm Rhondda: [*Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah!*](#))

Earthly kings, amazed and wond'ring, look upon the Church with fear.

See them flee in dread and anguish, knowing that the Lord is near.

For the city of the Savior God will keep forevermore!

God will keep forevermore!

For Your grace and lovingkindness we proclaim Your matchless worth!

As Your Name is, great and boundless, let Your praise fill all the earth.

Let Your people sing rejoicing for the judgment of Your truth;

From Egypt to Moab: Deuteronomy 1, 2

for the judgment of Your truth.

Walk about the blessed city, see her beauty, see her power.
Count her ramparts, filled with glory, look on ev'ry mighty tower.
Tell her glory to the nations: God will guide her evermore;
God will guide her evermore!

4 Help in Times of Trouble

Opening Prayer: Psalm 46.1-3

God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though its waters roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with its swelling.

Psalm 46.1-3

(St. Chrysostom: [*We Have Now Known Thee As We Ought*](#))

God is our refuge and our strength; He is our help in times of need.
Thus though the earth beneath us should change, the sea consume the mountain range;
waters may roar with raging speed; yet God will rescue us at length.

Read Psalm 46

Preparation

1. How do the psalmists refer to God in this psalm?
2. How do they depict the sovereign might of God?

Meditation

We can imagine that, as gatekeepers in the temple, the sons of Korah observed many people coming and going. Doubtless, many of those people were in deep distress about one thing or another. The sons of Korah saw it on their faces, heard it in their weeping, and felt it in their sorrow, grief, or uncertainty as they walked by.

They must have said to themselves, “They’ve come to the right place.”

When your soul is cheerless and in mourning (Ps. 43.1-4); when oppressors and enemies threaten to undo you (Ps. 44.4-8); when it seems as if the entire earth is conspiring to overwhelm and destroy you (Ps. 46.1-3); or when you are all alone in your sinfulness and distress (Ps. 88) – God can be your Refuge and Strength (Ps. 46.7, 11).

The psalms composed by this band of brothers would have been excellent reminders to the people of God that He is always available to them, always willing to receive and comfort them, and always available in all His strength to help them. Singing these psalms today can bring us to rest in God’s Presence, promise, and power in our times of need.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The sons of Korah were good gatekeepers. They kept watch on the comings and goings of the people, and on their spiritual and physical well-being. They were adept observers of action and attitude.

When we long for a “son of Korah” to observe and care about us, we might be left feeling bereft. However, when God asks us to be good observers of others, we must be ready to do the work.

But God is there for us both to be a comfort and to teach us how to comfort. His best advice is to “Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46.10).

Job suggests that we “Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God” (Job 37.14) to echo what the sons of Korah say to “Come, behold the works of the LORD...” (Ps. 46.8).

We want to receive help from the LORD in times of trouble and we want to give help for the same. When we truly love others, we want them to know that God is God. And that through Him only, will be found the safety that we seek for our souls and for theirs.

“God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; *though* its waters roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with its swelling” (Ps. 46.1-3).

As we seek to be a “son of Korah” to those in our Personal Mission Field, we can eagerly come before the face of God to request help, to be a help. “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4.16).

Reflection

1. How do you experience God’s help in your times of need? How would you advise a fellow believer to seek the Lord’s help in a time of need?
2. In what sense are we as believers like the sons of Korah in our Personal Mission Fields?
3. How can you better prepare to help other believers know the help of the Lord in their times of need?

...the psalmist consoles us by saying, “God is our refuge and fortress.” For, although powers of this world do not defend us, nevertheless God protects us and keeps us from harm. Viktorin Strigel (1524-1569), Hyponemata in All the Psalms 8

Closing Prayer: Psalm 46.4-11

Turn your trials, fears, and doubts over to the Lord. Shelter in Him, and find strength to serve Him in whatever is before you today.

Psalm 46.4-11

(St. Chrysostom: [*We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*](#))

God’s everlasting, joyous grace gladdens the city where He dwells.

Safely in Him, we will not be moved; when morning dawns, His love will be proved.

Fears and distresses Jesus dispels for His beloved, chosen race.

Kingdoms arise and rage and roar, threat’ning the earth with sore distress;

nations may fall, earth melt away, His Word is yet our hope and stay.

God is among us, ever to bless; He is our stronghold evermore.

Come see the works of God’s Right Hand! He breaks the nations of the earth,

shatters their foolish weapons and pride, sets all their sinful strength aside;

them He will show His infinite worth as they before His judgment stand.

Rest in the Lord and be at peace, all who are mired in sore travail:

Lift up our God, praise Jesus our Lord; proclaim to all the earth His Word!

God is our stronghold, never to fail: thus may our hope and joy increase!

5 Appearing before the Lord

Opening Prayer: Psalm 42.1-3

As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
While they continually say to me,
“Where is your God?”

Sing Psalm 42.1-3

(Nettleton: *Come Thou Fount*)

As the deer pants for fresh water let my soul, Lord, pant for You!
Let my soul thirst as it ought to for the Savior, ever true!
Tears by day have been my portion, tears by night have been my food,
while my foes add to my sorrow, saying, “Where now is your God?”

Read Psalm 42

Preparation

1. How did the sons of Korah describe the condition of their soul?
2. Where did they turn for the renewal of their soul?

Meditation

The people who passed by the sons of Korah as they kept the gates of the temple were on their way to appear before the Lord. The looks on their faces may have revealed something of the intensity, sincerity, anticipation, or hope that coming before God engendered in them. In various of their psalms, the sons of Korah taught them what to expect and how to prepare for appearing before the Lord, and they gave them words to express their longing.

When our soul is downcast, the remedy is to seek the Presence of the Lord, like a deer panting after the water of a brook (Ps. 42.1, 2). He has the living water to slake the dryness in our soul. In His Presence we discover the light for our path and peace to help us endure in our journey (Pss. 43, 84).

But we must prepare well for our appearing before the Lord, setting aside all distractions and lesser loves to devote our attention entirely on Him (Ps. 45.10-15). In His Presence we must be still, relax, and sink into the arms of His love, so that we know Him in His exalted beauty and rest all our hopes in Him (Ps. 46.10).

We come to God confident that He will receive us because He has been gracious to us, making us His sons and daughters, and redeeming our soul for His glory (Ps. 49.15). We come into His Presence to focus on His glory, give Him abundant praise and thanks, sink into His joy and holiness and strength, and to hear about His great salvation to ever-increasing depths (Ps. 85.8, 9).

The better we prepare for coming into the Presence of the Lord, the more His Presence will enfold, enthrall, and transform us.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

In the grace and mercy of God, we are never judged for asking questions. At least the right questions.

In Psalm 42 the sons of Korah asked these questions:

“When shall I come and appear before God?”
“Why are you cast down, O my soul?”
“Why are you disquieted within me?”
“Why have You forgotten me?”
“Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”

The psalmists question God with “When?” and “Why?” but they never question the existence of God. It is only others who question “Where?” (Ps. 42.3, 10).

There is no valid question relating to God’s “whereabouts”. David sums that up for us with:

“Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
If I ascend into heaven, You are there;
if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.
If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there Your hand shall lead me, and
Your right hand shall hold me” (Ps. 139.7-10).

God understands that we may feel downcast and disquieted. He knows we may even feel forgotten. But He also knows that He is always everywhere that we might ever be, to offer us love and hope. “Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God” (Ps. 42.5, 11).

Reflection

1. How do you prepare for appearing before the Lord – in prayer, during your devotions, for worship?
2. Why is appearing before the Lord the Christian’s greatest privilege and blessing?
3. How can we as Christians encourage one another to seek the Presence of the Lord more consistently?

Christ the Lord is the fountain of waters from which flows everything that restores us. Flowing streams can often run dry, but a fountain is always supplied with water. So we are rightly invited to hurry to the liquid of the sacred source; there our desire is never able to experience thirst. Cassiodorus (485-580), *Explanation of the Psalms* 42.2

Closing Prayer: Psalm 42.4-11

Let your soul long for the Presence of the Lord. Look into the glorious face of Jesus (v. 5, cf. 2 Cor. 4.6) and rest in the strength of His might and love. Recall all the good works He does for you; commit your day to Him.

Sing Psalm 42.4-11

(Nettleton: *Come Thou Fount*)

Now I pour my soul out in me as these thoughts come to my mind.
And I long to once again be where true worship I might find.
Oh my soul, be not despairing! Hope in God, and praise His Name!
For the Lord, your burden bearing, will restore your peace again.

Oh my God, my soul is weary, therefore I remember You.
Let Your grace and goodness near be, and Your promise, firm and true.
Lord, when trials and fears surround me, Your commands will be my song;
when distresses sore confound me, Your great love will keep me strong.

Lord, forget me not in mourning ‘neath my foes’ oppressing hand.
See their mocking, hear their scorning; help my weary soul to stand.

From Egypt to Moab: Deuteronomy 1, 2

Hope in God, praise Him forever when despair on you has trod.
Look to Jesus; never, never doubt your gracious, saving God.

6 Revive Us Again!

Opening Prayer: Psalm 85.4-6

Restore us, O God of our salvation,
And cause Your anger toward us to cease.
Will You be angry with us forever?
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?
Will You not revive us again,
That Your people may rejoice in You?

Psalm 85.4-6

(Lyons: *O Worship the King*)

Restore us, O God, renew us in peace, and cause all Your wrath against us to cease.
Will You evermore all Your wrath to us show? Revive us that we may Your joy again know.

Read Psalm 85

Preparation

1. What was the state of God's people in this psalm?
2. What were the psalmists seeking?

Meditation

All the psalms by the sons of Korah, like all the other psalms, seek a fuller measure of God's great salvation. God's people long to be with Him. They prepare well to appear before Him, and they long to see more of His greatness. Since we are His dwelling place, we should expect more of His Presence, promise, and power to be evident in us (Heb. 11.1). And the sons of Korah teach us both how to think about such revival and how to pray about it, too.

To be revived is to know the help of God in our times of need (Pss. 42.5, 8; 44.25, 26). We sense His returning to us to renew us in His grace, show us more of His beauty, and fit us for service in His Kingdom (Pss. 45, 47, 48). As we are revived, we rejoice in the Lord and praise Him for His goodness to us (Pss. 44.8; 45.1, 2; 87). We know the strength of the Lord flowing through us again, and we are ready to serve Him according to His will (Pss. 46, 85).

The result of being revived is that His people work to extend the Kingdom of God to the nations and generations of the earth (Pss. 45, 36, 48) so that the praises of God extend far beyond us into every corner of creation (Ps. 48.10), bringing mercy, peace, righteousness, and prosperity to the world, according to the promises of God (Ps. 85.8-13).

God's great salvation is always near to us, always ready to be in, for, and through us more than we have ever dared to ask or think (Ps. 85.9; Eph. 3.20). In their contribution to the psalter, the sons of Korah will encourage and guide us in seeking revival, renewal, and awakening by the grace of God.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The Matthew Henry quote in today's study clearly states what needs to happen in our hearts to experience a true need for revival: "When God forgives sin, He covers it..."

And why does it need to be covered? Because, frankly, it is awful. It is akin to God's hygienic instruction to the children of Israel: "Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse" (Deut. 23.12, 13). That is the quality of our sin. Refuse in dire need of covering.

Only when we understand who we are, and the need we have, can we truly seek real repentance and revival. Only then can we understand the great gift of cleansing salvation that God offers through Jesus Christ. Only then will we be able to barely comprehend His forgiveness, mercy, and grace.

Oh Lord, do revive us again! Let us bask in Your promises and rejoice in Your coverage of our sins:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Ps. 32.1).

“You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin” (Ps. 85.2).

“He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge...” (Ps. 91.4).

Now we can confidently agree with John that: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” However, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I Jn. 1.8, 9).

Ready for revival. First, our own. Then the church. Onward to the world!

Reflection

1. What do you understand by the term “revival”? How do the sons of Korah seem to have meant it?
2. Why are confession and repentance from sin essential to revival of any kind?
3. When revival comes to us and our churches, what should we expect? What forms does revival take?

The favor of God is the fountain of happiness to nations, as well as to particular persons. When God forgives sin, he covers it; and when he covers the sin of his people, he covers it all. See what the pardon of sin is. In compassion to us, when Christ our Intercessor has stood before thee, thou hast turned away thine anger. When we are reconciled to God, then, and not till then, we may expect the comfort of his being reconciled to us. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 85.1-7

Closing Prayer: Psalm 85.1-3, 7-13

Call on the Lord to forgive our sins, revive His Church, and bring a great awakening to the world.

Psalm 85.1-3, 7-13

(Lyons: *O Worship the King*)

O Lord, Your favor showed to Your land; Your people You saved by Your mighty hand.
Their sins You forgave, all Your wrath You withdrew; You turned back the anger which to them was due.

Lord, show us Your love; restore us, we pray! And help us to hear the words that You say.
Speak peace to Your people; in truth let us stand. We fear You; let glory and grace fill our land.

In Jesus God’s grace and truth are combined; both goodness and peace in Him do we find.
Truth springs from the earth as He walks in our midst, and righteousness flows from the heav’ns as a gift.

The Lord by His grace will give what is good; our land will produce abundance of food.
And righteousness will go before the Lord’s face, and make of His footsteps a way in this place.

7 Wake-up Call

Opening Prayer: Psalm 44.5-8

Through You we will push down our enemies;
Through Your name we will trample those who rise up against us.
For I will not trust in my bow,
Nor shall my sword save me.
But You have saved us from our enemies,
And have put to shame those who hated us.
In God we boast all day long,
And praise Your name forever.

Sing Psalm 44.5-8, 23-26

(Faithfulness: *Great is Thy Faithfulness*)

Through You shall we all our enemies vanquish; them will we trample in Your mighty Name.
We will not trust in our strength or our wisdom; Jesus will save us; we'll boast of His fame!

Refrain vv, 23-26

Rise up, awake, O Lord! Hide not Your face from us,
see our affliction, our suffering and pain!
See how our soul is sunk down with oppression;
rise up and help and redeem us we pray!

Read Psalm 44, meditate on verses 23-26

Preparation

1. What did the psalmists want God to do?
2. Why did they believe He would do that?

Meditation

Like the psalms of their contemporary, Asaph, the psalms of the sons of Korah offer a wake-up call to the people of God of their day. They sought to awaken the people to the greatness of God and of their calling to worship Him. The sons of Korah offered the people of their day words of self-examination, reminders of God's work in the past, celebrations of His beauty and greatness, liturgies of comfort and revival, and guidelines for their journey and mission with the Lord.

The temple of Solomon had just been built, and the people were worshiping in a new and magnificent way, such as Israel never had worshiped before. The sons of Korah sought to enhance this worship by waking-up the people to the great salvation God had graciously provided them, urging them on in seeing the Lord and laying hold on His promises.

We'll be looking at each psalm in this sequence, taking them in order as they appear in the Scriptures – which is not, in every case, the same as the order in which they were composed. These poems, prayers, and songs contain powerful images, memorable language, and abounding hope for the people of God in every age.

And the greatest hope of all – one which the sons of Korah do not fail to put before us – is the hope that God Himself might “Awake!” and “Arise!” to our aid, to “help” and “redeem” and raise and restore us, that the praise of His glory may extend to all the nations and peoples of the earth.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The sons of Korah ask provocative, but not inflammatory, questions of God: “Why do You sleep?” “Why do You hide Your face from us?” “Why do You forget our affliction and our oppression?”

As to the first question, we might be inclined to say, “That’s not even a relevant question!” We know we can sleep in peace because God never sleeps. Didn’t David say, “He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep”? (Ps. 121.3, 4)

As for the second question, we all know that God must hide His face from our sins because “[He is] of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness” (Hab. 1.13). He even turned away from His Own dear Son when He was covered in our sins, as we learn from Jesus when He cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27.46).

And finally, the third question about being forgotten by our heavenly Father just isn’t valid – except as an expression of one who feels separated from God. God, we know, does not forget us. “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid...for the LORD your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you” (Deut. 31.6). Hebrews 13.5 restates this same precious promise: “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”

The sons of Korah pique our interest with these rhetorical questions. And that is good. But these questions also lead us to the knowledge that *we* are the ones who need to “Awake!” and *we* are the ones in need of help and forgiveness. And that help is just a request away. “LORD, our soul is bowed down to the dust; and our body clings to the ground. Arise for our help, and redeem us for Your mercies’ sake” (Ps. 44.25, 26)

The psalms of the sons of Korah will be for us a much-needed “Wake-up Call”.

Reflection

1. Why do we sometimes feel that God has turned His face away from us, or left us all alone? What’s the remedy to feeling this way?
2. The sons of Korah will focus us more intently on the beauty, greatness, and might of God. How should we expect to benefit from such a focus?
3. Do we need a “wake-up call” from time to time? Explain.

Israel’s God does not sleep (121:3, 4; Is. 40:28). The cry to awake is an appeal for God to act on behalf of His people. The cry is based on the people’s faith that the LORD will forgive. In v. 12, the people suggested that God had sold them; here they ask Him to redeem them—to buy them back for Himself. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Notes on Psalm 44.23-26

Closing Prayer: Psalm 44.1, 2 23-26

Call on the Lord to awaken to the needs of His people in these trying times, and to come to their aid, bringing conviction of sin, the promises of His covenant, and the strength of His Spirit for revival, renewal, and awakening.

Sing Psalm 44.1, 2, 23-26

(Faithfulness: *Great is Thy Faithfulness*)

O God our ears have heard, ancients have taught us, all that You did for them long years ago,
how by Your hand You defeated the nations, and to the promised land let Israel go.

Refrain vv. 23-26

Rise up, awake, O Lord! Hide not Your face from us,
see our affliction, our suffering and pain!
See how our soul is sunk down with oppression;
rise up and help and redeem us we pray!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. How do we see the greatness of God in the psalms by the sons of Korah?
2. These psalms can be looked at as a wake-up call for Israel. Explain.
3. Who were the sons of Korah, and how were they able to compose these beautiful psalms?
4. Which of the psalms of the sons of Korah have spoken most helpfully to you thus far? Explain.
5. What's the most important lesson you have learned from our study of these psalms? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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