

# Sons of Korah #1: Lesson of Hope: Psalms 42

by Stephen Kaung

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*The sermon explores the theme of longing for God, using Psalm 42 as a model, and encourages listeners to prioritize their relationship with God above all else.*

**Duration:** 58:01

**Scripture:** Psalm 42:1, Matthew 6:33, 2 Corinthians 3:17, 2 Corinthians 4:6

**Topics:** "Sons of Korah"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the verses from 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and 4, specifically verse 6 and verse 17. The main theme is the revelation of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ and the freedom that comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit. The preacher emphasizes the significance of being able to see the face of God and how the veil has been removed through Jesus. The sermon also touches on the psalm written by David during a time of rebellion and danger, highlighting the importance of seeking after God and having the consciousness of His abiding presence.

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## Transcript

May we turn to Psalm 42. The book of Psalm 42. We'll read the whole Psalm.

You know, when we read the book of Psalms, often times we forget the little prints before the psalm. And these prints are very important. To the chief musician, an instruction of the sons of Korah.

Verse 1. As the heart painted after the water brooks, so painted my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for thee, for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my bread day and night, while they say unto me all the day, Where is thy God? These things I remember and have poured out my soul within me.

How I pass along with the multitude. How I went on with them to the house of God, with a voice of joy and praise, a festive multitude. Why art thou cast down, my soul, and art disquieted in me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him for the health of his countenance.

My God, my soul is cast down within me. Therefore do I remember thee from the land of the Jordan and the Hermans, from Mount Miza. Thee calleth unto deep, and the noise of thy cataracts, all thy breakers and thy billows are gone over me.

In the daytime will Jehovah command his lovingkindness, and in the night his song shall be with me, a prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God, my rock, why hast thou forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a crushing in my bones, my adversaries reproach me, while they say unto me all the day, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God. Let's pray.

Our Heavenly Father, how we praise and thank thee for thy word. We just ask that thy Holy Spirit will quicken thy word to our hearts, bring us into the spirit of thy word, and may thy spirit come and fill our hearts. And to thee be all the praise and glory, in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen. Of the hundred and fifty songs, there are about eleven, or more accurately twelve, songs that are attributed to the sons of Korah. Who are the sons of Korah? If you go back to the book of Numbers, you will find in chapter fifteen, there was a rebelling among the children of Israel.

And this rebelling was headed by a man called Korah. He was of the tribe of Levi. He was a Kohite.

He was given high privilege in serving in the tabernacle. And yet he led a great rebelling, not only against Moses and Aaron, but against God himself. There was Korah, with Dathan and Abihu, of the tribes of Reuben, and two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation of Israel.

They rebelled against God, against God's order. They came to Moses and Aaron and said, why do you usurp the position? Are not the whole congregation of Israel holy? Outwardly, it seemed to be a very spiritual protest. But as you read the chapter, you will find Moses pointed out to Korah that God had given you great privilege in serving in the tabernacle.

Why is it that you desire priesthood which God had reserved for the sons of Aaron? And also he reproached Abihu and Dathan and those leaders and said, why do you rebel against God? Out of that great rebelling, God did a new thing. The earth was opened. Korah, Dathan, Abihu, and those that belonged to them were livingly swallowed into Hades.

The earth was opened and they were swallowed. And the two hundred and fifty leaders, as they were trying to offer incense to God, they were burned to death. This was the man, Korah.

But isn't it strange? Here you find the sons of Korah. They became the sweet singers of Israel. And as you read Numbers chapter twenty-six, verse eleven, you find that the children of Korah were spared.

They did not die with their father. We do not know for sure whether the sons of Korah did not participate in the conspiracy with their father or whether they did. But they repented.

But anyway you find these children of Korah, they passed through great affliction. They saw their father livingly swallowed by the earth. They saw these people burned unto death.

And yet they were spared. No doubt they passed through such terrible experience with fear and trembling. They realized the mercy of God.

It was only by the mercy of God that they were not consumed. And because of that they offered themselves to God in a way that seemed to be higher than many of other people of God. They were the sons of the cross.

They had passed through the sufferings of the cross. They had gone through death and out of death into resurrection, into life. They were the children of the mercy of God and the grace of God.

And they were so touched by God's mercy and grace in sparing them that they dedicated themselves to God in a very living and real way. As you read 1 Chronicles, you will find that they became not only the doorkeepers of the tabernacle and later on of the temple, but they also became the singers, the choir in the house of God. Out of their deep experience, they became the doorkeepers.

In other words, they knew who could enter into the house of God and serve and who could not. They knew who could approach the altar and who could not. It was not theory to them, it was experience to them.

And because of that they were fit for that kind of service. They became singers of Israel. Not professional singers, just with beautiful voices, but out of their deep experience they knew how to sing unto the Lord a new song.

They continue on in such capacity even in the days of King Hezekiah. These are the sons of Korah. And as you read these 11 or 12 Psalms, you will find in these Psalms expressions of deep affliction, trouble, problems, death, persecutions, and yet out of all these come forth hope, faith, love, and their only desire is for God, for the living God.

They want nothing but God Himself. So I do believe that in these Psalms of the sons of Korah, there are spiritual and eternal lessons for us to learn. That we may be like the sons of Korah.

That we may have Psalms, Psalms to sing unto our God. Of the sons of Korah, or for the sons of Korah. Of course we do not know if the sons of Korah actually composed these Psalms.

On the contrary, we believe that most of these Psalms were composed by David. You know the 150 Psalms is entitled by C. H. Spurgeon as the treasury of David. Even though you will find in some Psalms it is recorded that David wrote them.

And in many Psalms David's name was not mentioned. But David as the sweet singer of Israel, as you read these Psalms you will find David there. Most likely most of these Psalms are written by David.

A man at the God's own heart. A man who has gone through so much. A man who has been on mountain tops and in deep valleys.

A man who has passed through the valley of the shadow of death. A man who has been on the rock, the tower, the high place. Out of his many experiences of God, he poured out his heart in Psalms to sing unto God.

And we believe that probably many of these Psalms attributed to the sons of Korah are actually written by David. David wrote these Psalms. He gave these Psalms to the chief musician to put it into music.

And probably, most likely, the sons of Korah sang these Psalms in the house of God. It is not just for everyone and anyone to sing Psalms unto God. It requires a certain spiritual background, history, experience.

To enter into the spirit of David. To enter into the spirit of Christ. In order to sing these Psalms unto God.

And these sons of Korah being experienced in a deep way, they were qualified to sing these Psalms unto God. So may the Lord help us. Even if we may not be the ones who compose these Psalms, but by the mercy of God, we may have a little bit of what David had gone through.

Or what other saints of God had gone through. And out of these little experiences, we come to know God a little bit more. And then, even though we may not compose them, we may not be able to do that, and yet we will be qualified to sing these Psalms unto God.

And we'll be accepted. Psalm 42 is the first of these Psalms of the sons of Korah. It is an instruction.

An instruction owed. In other words, this Psalm is to teach us. To instruct us in the things of God.

It has a permanent and eternal value. And it is something that we ought to learn by heart. These Psalms begin with, As the heart pined after the water brooks, so pined my soul after thee, O God.

Now most commentators believe that the occasion or the background of this Psalm written by David was the time when his son Absalom rebelled against him. If you go to Samuel, 2 Samuel, chapter 15, you will find that at one time, David's son Absalom rebelled against him. And he was able to gather the people against David.

And David was in such danger that he had to flee from Jerusalem in haste. And a number of people fled with David. As they went over Mount Olive, David had his head covered, his feet bare, he was weeping as he fled.

And the people who fled with him also covered their heads. They were in such shame and reproach. Then you remember, the priests who bore the Ark of God came to David.

They wanted to flee with David. But David told the priests, Go back to Jerusalem. Back to the tent that he has set for the Ark.

For he said, If God should show mercy to me, I will come back. And as he went over the hills, you remember Simeon of the tribe of Benjamin? How he walked on the other side of the hill? How he cursed David? Threw stone at David? And said, God is now judging you because you took the throne of Saul. And his people wanted to kill Simeon.

But David said, No, don't touch it. It may be God who commands him to curse me. And when God sees my situation, he may have mercy on me.

David fled from Jerusalem. He fled from the house of God. He went over the river Jordan.

He came to Transjordan area. And out of the distress of his heart, he wrote this song. As the heart pined after the water broke, so pined my soul after thee, O God.

A heart or a hind or a gazelle is a beautiful animal, swift in action, very sensitive, watchful, alert. But the one great desire of a heart or a hind or a gazelle is water. A heart pined for the water broke.

It is thirsty. There is nothing that can satisfy its thirst but water. And how a heart seeks after water broke.

And we are told that a heart seeks after water not only to satisfy its thirst, but when a heart is pursued by the hunter, he tries to find water brooks in order to cover his scent. That he may escape from the hunter. If

you ever notice a heart at the water broke, you can see how it pains after it.

It longs after it. It desires it. With such desire it literally paints.

And here David said, as the heart painted after the water broke, so painted my soul after thee, O God. Now dear brothers and sisters, think of the situation. David was dethroned, as it were, by his son.

He was in exile. And probably when a person was in exile, under such circumstance, he will be plotting how to regain his kingdom. He will be planning for his revenge.

No doubt he will be thinking of himself. He will be thinking of what he had lost. The kingdom.

The throne. But dear brothers and sisters, with David it was different. Even though there was plan laid as how to fight against the rebellion, regain the throne and the kingdom, and yet in the very heart of David, it was not the kingdom.

It was not the throne. It was not the people. It was not the glory, the honor, the wealth, the land.

No. What was deepest in his heart was God. He did not mind too much about the loss of a kingdom.

Or the loss of a throne. But there was one thing that he painted after. It was God.

He was willing to lose everything, except losing God. Oh, how his soul panned it after God. Like a heart, he was thirsty for God.

He was literally heaving within his soul for God. Oh God, where are you? Where can I come before you? That is the one longing of his heart. Dear brothers and sisters, is this not the normal condition of a child of God? Not necessarily when you are in time of trouble.

Certainly when you are in time of trouble, you may pain after God even more. But even in ordinary days, when everything is peaceful and calm, is it not that we shall paint after God as a heart painteth after water drops? He is life to us. He is water to us.

We are told that people can live without food for days. But you cannot live without water for long. Thirstiness is even more painful than hunger.

And dear brothers and sisters, should we not hunger and thirst after righteousness? Should we not hunger and thirst after God? Should not that be our one passion? And our one passion is God, God himself. There is a famous saying by St. Augustine. He said in his confession, he said, Oh God, my soul is made for Thee, and I could never find rest to my soul until I rest in Thee.

Dear brothers and sisters, are we restless? Are we painting? Is there that upheaval within our soul? And why are we restless? Why do we paint? Is it because of something? Some material things? Some earthly loss? Or is it because of God? Do we ever paint after God? Do we ever have that kind of feeling that I'm thirsty unto death? Is there that upheaval within my soul for God? Dear brothers and sisters, how the scripture said, Blessed are those who are hunger and thirsty after righteousness, for they shall be filled. If we are hunger and thirsty after God, we shall be filled with God. The reason why there is so little of Him in us is because we are not hungry after Him.

We are not thirsty after Him. We feel comfortable even if we do not have the sense of His presence. If we do not have that sweet communion with Him, we think we can live.

Oh, but if you are hard, you will not live without water. If you are a soul who loves God like David, you will not be able to live without God, not for a moment. My soul thirsty for God, for the living God.

God is the God of life. He is life to us. Brothers and sisters, it is not a matter of insignificance.

It is a life and death matter. Whether you have God, whether you have that communion with Him, or whether you are deprived of that fellowship with Him, it is life and death to us. David knew that.

He thirsted for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? You know, it is almost like a paradox. When the priest who bore the Ark came to David, in hypology it meant that God was going with David into exile.

But David told the priest, no, I do not want to see the Ark of God wander again. The Ark of God had wandered enough. It had wandered through the wilderness for 40 years.

It had wandered in the land for hundreds of years until David moved the Ark to Mount Zion in the tent of David. It was David's desire that the Ark of God should come into rest. And now David was in exile.

The Ark was to follow, and David said, no, no. Bring the Ark back. Let it rest.

If it should please God, He will allow me to come back to worship there. It is almost like a paradox. And yet when David was in Mahanaim, on the eastern side of Jordan, oh, how he longed and said, when, when shall I come and appear before God? You know, in one sense, God is omnipresent.

He is everywhere. Whether it is in Jerusalem, or it is in Mahanaim, God certainly was there with David. But on the other hand, as you read the Old Testament, you will find God told Moses, after the children of Israel enter into the Promised Land, God will choose a place to put His name there.

And there the twelve tribes of Israel must go to offer sacrifices and to worship God. They were not allowed to offer sacrifices anywhere in the Promised Land. They had to go to Jerusalem, to the place of God's choice, and there to offer sacrifice and to worship God.

So in one sense, God was with David. God had never left David. And yet in another sense, David was away from Zion, from Jerusalem.

He was away from the place where God's name was placed. He was away from the tent. He was away from the congregation that gathered before God to worship.

And because of that, he felt the loss of it. Applying to us today, dear brothers and sisters, wherever we are, in whatever circumstances we may be in, God has never left us nor forsaken us. You remember in John, he says, when the Comforter shall come, he shall dwell in you.

He will never leave you nor forsake you. In the New Testament time, we are in a better position than those Old Testament saints. In Old Testament times, God was with them, but God was not in them.

But today, God is in us. He is in us, wherever you are, in whatever circumstance you may go through, He is with you. He is always there.

And yet, on the other hand, sometimes we may lose the sense of His presence. He is present, but so far as we are concerned, we are not conscious of His presence. And sometimes we may even be conscious of His absence.

And when we lose the consciousness of His presence, we lose our very life. Our strength is gone. Our joy is gone.

Our faith is gone. Our hope is gone. Everything is gone.

And dear brothers and sisters, when we enter into such darkness, oh, how our soul cries out to God, for the living God. We cry out, say, When shall I come and appear before you? Yet in another sense, it is true. Today we do not worship in Jerusalem, nor do we must worship in Mount Gerasing.

We worship in spirit and in truth. God is a spirit, and He is seeking for true worshipers, those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is not the time, it is not the place.

It is in spirit and in truth. And yet on the other hand, God does say, Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them. We are exhorted not to forsake the assembling of the saints.

Dear brothers and sisters, God is in you, He is with you, but there is a difference. When you are gathered with the saints, when God's people are coming together, there is an extra presence of God that you do not find alone. And this is something that David missed, and this is something if we keep ourselves from assembling with God's people, you will miss that.

When shall I come and appear before God? There is another translation, which is the more literal one. It says, When shall I see the face of God? When shall I see the face of God? You know, dear brothers and sisters, there is nothing more vital in our Christian life than the face of God. What is the face of God? You remember once Moses, he went to intercede for the children of Israel, and God answered him.

God answered him in grace, in mercy. And then Moses dared to ask, Let me see thy face. I want to see you.

But God said, No. You cannot see my face. You can see my back.

So God hid Moses in the cracks of a rock. And when the glory of God passed by, Moses saw the back of God, but not his face. How precious must be the face of God! And do you not know that we today are privileged to see the face of God? In 2 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians chapter 3, no, chapter 4, 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 6, Because it is the God who spake that out of darkness light should shine, who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Then chapter 3, now, verse 17, Now the Lord is the Spirit, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, would unveil face, or transform according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit. We today are privileged to see the face of God.

We see God in the face of Jesus Christ. We can look unto the glory of the Lord with unveiled face. The veil is broken, is rent.

Now we can be face to face with God. We can see His face. Dear brothers and sisters, this is the highest privilege that God has granted to us in mercy and grace.

But what is the face of God? First of all, the face of God is the full revelation of God. If you see His face, you see Him in all His fullness. If you see His back, you see some of His features, yes.

But you don't see Him as He is. But when you see His face, you see Him in all His fullness. And brothers and sisters, this is our privilege.

We are privileged to see Him in all that He is. Why? Because the church is His body. The fullness of Him who fills all and in all.

How we need to see His face? The more you see His face, the more you know Him. One day we shall see Him as He is. And we shall be like Him.

But dear brothers and sisters, you do not need to wait until that day. It already begins. We are seeing His face daily if we are not veiled.

If our heart is turned towards Him, then we shall see His face. And He will reveal Himself to us. And we shall know Him.

And of course, out of that, secondly, we shall be like Him. Seeing His face is not just seeing. Seeing His face is to be in His immediate presence.

And when you are in His immediate presence, He will begin to communicate Himself to you. And you will be transformed from glory to glory according to His image until you are conformed. Oh, how important it is that in our daily life we can see His face.

How important it is that we may be face to face with Him. Face to face. That He may be able to communicate Himself to us in such liberty that we may be transformed from glory to glory.

That is seeing His face. Dear brothers and sisters, do you long to see Him? Do you paint to see His face? What if He hides Himself from you? Do you have such experience when it seems as if God has hid Himself from you? And how do you feel? You feel dead. You are literally dead.

And how you cry out, hide not your face. Let me see your face. You know, if I can let out a little of my own secret, sometimes my prayer before God is when I seem to be losing His faith in God.

Even if I cannot see Your smiling face, let me see Your angry face. I want to see Your face. There is nothing more important than to see the face of God.

And it is the cry of David, When can I come to see the face? My tears have been my bread day and night, while they say unto me all the day, Where is thy God? When David was in such deep trouble, it seemed as if the greatest trouble to him was not his son, was not the people that rebelled against him. The greatest of his trouble was he seemed to lose the consciousness of God's presence. And because of that he couldn't bear it.

Tears became his bread day. Oftentimes, dear brothers and sisters, we shed tears. We eat our tears.

But for what purpose? For what reason? It is because we pity ourselves. We love ourselves so much. When we do not get what we think we should, we weep.

But have you ever shed tears for God? You weep because you want Him. Tears have been my bread day and night. When they say, the enemy comes in and says, Where is your God? Oh, brothers and sisters, how important that we have the consciousness of His abiding presence.

Nothing really matters in our lives than the consciousness of His abiding presence. If God is with you, who can be against you? There is nothing to be afraid of. But when you lose the consciousness of His presence, you are really in the valley of the shadow of death.

And that troubles David more than anything else. Where is thy God? Where? And when David was, as it were, sunk to the bottom of the pit, then he began to recall, These things I remember and have poured out my soul within me. How I passed along with a multitude, how I went on with them to the house of God with a voice of joy and praise, a festive multitude.

You know, when you are in trouble, when it seems as if God has left you, probably one thing that would deepen your distress, and that is when you recall how in the past you are able to go to the house of God with a multitude, with a voice of joy and praise, and these happy times in the past seem to haunt you, seem to add anguish to you. But on the other hand, in remembering the past of what God has done for you, it does lift you out of your pit. So you find it is really a paradox.

On the one hand, it deepens your sorrow. And yet on the other hand, it brings you back to God. So here you'll find verse 5. Why art thou cast down, my soul, and art this quieted in me, hoping God? For I shall yet praise him for the health of his countenance.

Why art thou cast down, my soul? David was speaking to David. The spirit in David was talking to his soul. Faith was talking to fear.

Why art thou cast down, my soul, and art this quieted in me? Why? And you know, in the literal translation, it says, Why do you cast yourself down, my soul? Why do you cast yourself down, my soul? You think it is your circumstance that cast you down? No. You think it is people who cast you down? No. You think it is the trouble, the problem that cast you down? No.

You cast yourself down. Brothers and sisters, when you look at your circumstance, you are down. When you look at people, you are down.

When you look at your problem, you are down. When you look within yourself, you are disquieted. You are cast down.

But you are not supposed to look at all these. You are supposed to look up at God. Whenever you are in depression, remember, it is not circumstance.

It is not problem. It is not people. It is because you look within yourself and begin to pity.

What you should do is look up. Look up unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. And when you look up, you are brought up Immediately you are lifted up.

So the spirit speaks to the soul and said, Why do you cast yourself down? Why do you disquiet yourself? Hope in God. Hope in God. There is hope in God.

In you there is no hope. That's true. In the circumstance, they give you no hope.

That's always true. In people you got no hope, no help. But God is the God of hope.

Hope in God. You see, when his spirit begins to talk to his soul, his spirit begins to lift his soul out of depression. He begins to look up.

Hope in God. For I shall yet praise him. That's faith.

Where there is hope, there is faith. Because David hoped in God, so he had the faith that he would yet praise God. He knew that God would get him out of all these troubles.

For the health of his country. The word health is also salvation. For the salvation of his countenance.

His face. In other words, David knew he would yet see the face of God. As he was talking to himself, his spirit began to rise up.

Hope in God. And there and then, the salvation of the face of God came. He saw God again.

The clouds were lifted. He saw the face of God. How healthy was the face of God.

So dear brothers and sisters, here you'll find David. Here you'll find the sons of Korah who were in full sympathy with David. They had all gone through deep waters and that only increased their longing for God.

And if anyone longs for God, he will not be disappointed. He shall see the salvation of the face. May God help us.

Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, how we praise and thank Thee for teaching us this lesson that nothing matters but Thy face. Oh, that we may not paint after other things, but we may paint after Thee, the living God. Oh Lord, we pray that by Thy grace we may always be in the light of Thy face.

If Thou art angry with us, show Thy face to us that we may repent. If Thou please, smile at us and encourage us. Oh, we do ask Thee, Lord, that Thou will create such a hunger and thirst in our soul for Thyself.

Do not allow us to be contented if we do not have Thy abiding presence. Give us hope. Give us faith.

And give us love. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

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