

Guest Preacher - Rev Florian Weicken

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Date: 13 September 2026

Preacher: Rev. Florian Weicken

[0:00] Psalm 42, the heading. To the choir master, a masculine of the sons of Korah.

! That is the sermon text for tonight.! At least part of that heading is the sermon text for tonight. And here we see how the sons of Korah are mentioned.

And we want to look at the sons of Korah tonight. And this is the first psalm that was written by the sons of Korah. Now admit that some would say we should maybe better translate the mascal for the sons of Korah.

The Hebrew preposition could also mean for. So it was actually written for them so that they should sing it. But then we would have to be consistent.

And we would also have to translate Psalm 41 as Psalm for David. Because it's exactly the same Hebrew preposition. So it is fair enough to say a mascal of the sons of Korah.

[1:11] It's the first psalm that is written by them. It's not the last psalm that was written by the sons of Korah. In total they wrote 12 psalms. But what is so special about the sons of Korah?

Except that they have written psalms. And this is pretty special, isn't it? That they have written psalms. They were inspired by God to write down the hymns and the songs for the church.

But the remarkable thing about the sons of Korah is that in the days of David, and we can assume they wrote it in the days of David, that they should not have been alive.

They should not have been alive. Because actually they were condemned sons. Condemned sons because of their forefather.

Because of the sin of their forefather. They were actually under a curse and condemnation. But yet they're alive in the days of David.

[2:19] And we are going to see that in this story we see an amazing story of grace in the sons of Korah. And therefore what we have before us, even in these very first words of Psalm 42, we have a lesson and a testimony of grace, of the grace of God.

And the title is A Testimony to the Grace of God. And I have three points for tonight. First point, condemned sons.

Condemned sons because this is what they should have been. Condemned sons. Secondly, spared sons. Spared sons. And thirdly, transformed sons.

We want to look at the first point. Condemned sons. Why were they condemned sons? Why were they condemned sons?

Now the answer we find 400, 500 years before the Psalm was written. And we have to go back in the Bible to number 16 to find the answer.

[3:30] 400, 500 years before the Psalm was written. And in number 16 we read of Korah's rebellion. And Korah was their forefather.

Sons of Korah. And we hear in number 16 of Korah's rebellion. Now, what happened in this rebellion? What happened in this rebellion?

Now we see that Korah, a son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram of the tribe of Reuben, they rebelled against Moses and Aaron.

Together with 250 leaders of the people of God. And Korah, by the way, was not just a follower. He was the instigator. He was the ringleader of that rebellion. Therefore, the whole company, the whole rebellion is also called the company of Korah.

[4:33] Korah's rebellion. He was not just a follower. He was actually the instigator. But why did they rebel? Why did they rebel against Moses and Aaron?

Now, there's several things that we see in the text. I'm not going to read number 16, the whole chapter. I'm just taking a few verses out. And we'll read a few verses then at the end of the chapter or about in the middle of the chapter.

But why were they rebelling? Now, for one thing, we see that they were questioning the legitimacy of Moses and Aaron's leadership in verse 3.

There they say, You have gone too far. For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord? They thought Moses and Aaron exalted themselves above the assembly of the Lord. And they wanted to have hierarchies that are not so clear, not such a clear order.

[5 : 39] And they thought that Moses and Aaron exalted themselves above the assembly. And then also a bit later on, we see that they were saying that Aaron and Moses were bad leaders.

In verse 14, Moreover, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men?

We will not come up. Because Moses had said they should now come up to come before the assembly of the Lord. They said, You're bad leaders. And you're also power hungry, Moses and Aaron.

That's also what they say in verse 13. They say, It is a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness, that you must also make yourselves a prince over us.

And then another thing Moses is saying himself is that Korah and his rebellion, they wanted to become priests. Now, the Levites were not in general priests.

[6 : 49] Some of the Levites were servants of the priestly family. And of course, Aaron was the priest and his family. Moses says, You only want to become priests.

That is what your goal is. And that is very clear. They wanted to become leaders themselves. They were not happy with what God had given them, in all the blessings he had given them.

And in all this, Moses says, in verse 11, they rebelled against the Lord. Verse 11, Therefore it is against the Lord that you and all your company have gathered together.

And then later on in this chapter, we see how God took the side of Moses and Aaron. And we see one of the grimmest judgments in the Bible.

We read from verse 26. And there we see how Moses is speaking to the congregation, saying, Depart, please, from the tents of these wicked men.

[7 : 59] Do you see this please in there? He's pleading with the people. What every good preacher should do, he's pleading with the people, Depart, please, from the tents of these wicked men and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be swept away with all their sins.

So they got away from the dwelling of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. And Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents together with their wives, their sons, and their little ones. And Moses said, Hereby you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works and that it has not been of my own accord. If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the Lord has not sent me.

But if the Lord creates something new and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them and they go down alive into shale, then you shall know that these men have despised the Lord.

And then verse 32, And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households and all the people who belong to Korah and all their goods.

[9 : 26] This is one of the grimmest judgments we see in the Holy Scriptures. And have you noticed, it wasn't just the men who were punished and judged, also their households.

Verse 32, And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households, as we just read. Their whole households were swallowed up and judged by God as a judicial act in God's righteousness.

As he even says in the Ten Commandments, For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers and the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me. And you may ask yourself, Is this just? Is this just? And the answer is, It is. It is.

Because since Adam's fall, we are all under condemnation. God, in his holy righteousness, could judge anyone and everyone, and he would still be holy and just and good.

[10 : 45] Small and old. Young and old, he could judge. And he would still be a holy and good God. And this judgment and God's righteousness, in general, should actually alarm us.

Because we see in it that God does not take sin lightly. Not at all. He hates sin. And he judges sin and sinners.

This is a holy God and a just God. But the next question you may ask yourself is, How is it then, if whole households have been judged, how is it that the sons of Korah were still alive in David's time, later?

Is this a contradiction in the Holy Scriptures? Or perhaps we are speaking about other sons of Korah? No, we don't. The sons of Korah that were the sons of Korah, of that Korah in number 16, that were still alive, of course, the future generations in David's time.

And that brings us to the second point, spared sons. The answer to our question may be, How is it that these sons survived? We find also in Numbers, in Numbers 26.

[12:11] In Numbers 26. In verse 9 and 11. And here we have a summary of the judgment. We have a summary of the rebellion.

And it is said in verse 9, These are the Dathan and Abiram chosen from the congregation who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah when they contended against the Lord.

And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured 250 men, and they became a warning.

But the sons of Korah did not die. But the sons of Korah did not die.

Obviously, the sons were spared. Do we know who these sons were? Yes, we do know who these sons were. They are mentioned in the Bible. In Exodus 6, 24.

[13:12] Asir, Elkanah, and Abiyasaf. We don't really learn much more about them, but these were the sons of Korah. Korah. And why were they spared?

Why were they spared? It's not easy to answer because we don't have much information about it.

But the only answer we really can give is that the sons of Korah were among the people who stepped away from Korah's rebellion.

because the sons of Korah already understood what we just read in the New Testament. In Matthew 10, verse 37, Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whenever a born-again Christian has to make the choice between God and Christ and his family, he will choose Christ.

He will choose Christ because he knows Christ is the eternal Son of God and is the greatest good that is existing.

[14:36] And this is exactly what these sons of Korah would have done. They had to choose.

Hopefully, we never have to choose. Hopefully, we never have to choose. But whenever a Christian has to choose, he will choose God. And this is exactly what the sons of Korah did.

They heard the call. They heard the call from Moses. Depart from these men. And they had one decision to take. Do I cling to my father or do I cling to God?

And we can be sure, probably with tears in their eyes, they stepped away from their father. Father, we love you, but we cannot follow you.

We want to follow Christ. We want to follow God's promises. And they walked away. I'm not sure whether we can imagine the pain.

[15:43] Stepping away, and not only stepping away, then also seeing how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up. Everyone in Korah's rebellion.

And they watched it. They saw it. How? How were they able to do this? They were only able to do this by the power of God.

Because He helped them. Because they loved God. And the Spirit of God was working in them.

And they loved God more than anything else.

More than anything else. Even though, of course, they loved their family as well. But they loved God more. In comparison to God, everything else was secondary.

Everything else was secondary. And everything faded into the background. Now, what happened after this?

[16:49] We see that the curse that was upon their father turned into blessing blessing for the sons of Korah. The curse was broken.

And what we see now in the story of the sons of Korah is blessing upon blessing. Why? Because they did this painful, painful step of obedience in following God and turning to God.

They could have been fatalistic about it. They could have said, our father sinned, therefore we just go into condemnation with him as well. But no, they turned to God. They turned to God.

And everything changed. And this we see now in the third point. Transformed sons. Transformed sons. As also the Ten Commandments say, we already read part of it. For I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandment.

[18:07] 400, 500 years later, we see that the sons of Korah were writing some of the most amazing psalms we have in the psalm book.

Psalms 42 and 43, we already mentioned. They helped thousands of Christians in depression. Psalm 42, we see Christ and his bride.

Psalm 46, we see how God is our refuge in troubled times. Psalms 84 and 85, we see psalms of revival written by the sons of Korah.

Or then also, Psalm 87, we see in that psalm how also the Gentiles will be citizens of Jerusalem. Or then a very special psalm, Psalm 88, this psalm is very special.

Why is this psalm so special? It's maybe not that well known to us. To some of us, I'm sure it is, but not to every one of us. It was written by a son of Korah, Heman.

[19:18] There are 17 generations approximately between him and Korah. And this Heman writes a psalm in which there is only darkness, no light.

All the other psalms, we see how there's a turn to the light. But in Psalm 88, there's only darkness describing the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ, no light, no glimmer of light.

And describing the experience of so many Christians when we don't see light. Or then even later, not only under David, also under Jehoshaphat, they're still sons of Korah, praising God 650 years later.

Or furthermore, there were also the leaders of the doorkeepers and Shalom, one of them, or his sons, they are even returning after the exile.

Then the list in Ezra too. Do we see the grace of God in the future generations and these generations and the following generations of the sons of Korah?

[20:34] Or another one, he wasn't part of the class of the sons of Korah because they were singers in the temple. But Samuel, the prophet Samuel, goes also back to the sons of Korah.

Do we see this blessing of God in all these generations over hundreds of years? How God again and again and again blessed him exactly how he promised in his holy word.

Ten commandments, you already read it. To a thousand generations. To a thousand generations. Is that also a great encouragement for us to pray, not only for our children, but also, Lord, revive us again.

A thousand generations are not over yet since the Reformation. You here in Scotland can pray that. We in Switzerland can pray this. It's not over.

God is still merciful and gracious as he has promised. Deuteronomy 30. There we see how Moses is speaking to the people after he has just shown to them the curses and the blessings and knowing they will go through both.

[21:55] And then he says to them, but when you return, chapter 30, Deuteronomy, and when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you and return to the Lord your God, you and your children and obey his voice in all that I command you today with all your heart and with all your soul, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you.

The sons of Korah, they returned. They turned to God. And then we read in Deuteronomy 30, verse 6, and the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, of your children, so that you may love the Lord with your whole heart and soul in order that you may live.

This is exactly what we see in the sons of Korah. This is exactly what we see in the sons of Korah. How God blessed all these generations again and again for hundreds of years after this painful act of obedience stepping away from their own father.

Now, because this is a blessing and because it is a grace of God, we cannot bless the next generation, we ourselves. We cannot do this.

Only God can do it. But he has given us the means, and one means is a godly life. It is, in all aspects, a godly life.

[23:58] Another means is to teach the next generation and not to stop teaching the next generation. And another means is to pray for the next generation and not to stop to pray for the next generation and not to stop believing.

And one thing we also see of these three things, we also see in the sons of Korah. They were surely teaching their next generation.

How can I say this? Well, why did they call themselves sons of Korah? Not very flattering, isn't it? To call yourself sons of Korah, reminding yourself of the wickedness of your forefather.

But that's exactly what they did. They reminded themselves and their next generation again and again of the sin and the judgment, but also of the grace and repentance and the devotion to the Lord.

And I think one hint, and I just recently was reminded, well, not reminded of this, someone pointed it out to me, that we see in Psalm 46 something amazing, again, written by the sons of Korah.

[25:22] I'm not sure, maybe you know that already, but we see in verse 2, therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way, written by the sons of Korah.

They didn't forget. They didn't forget. They were taught. They were taught, and they had a godly example.

And yes, we know hardly anything of the sons of Korah immediately like the sons who were stepping away from their father. We hardly know anything of that.

But then 400, 500 years later, the sons of Korah were blessed. And maybe that is also the case in our life. Maybe we hardly see something in our life or in the next generation, but it doesn't matter. Maybe 200 years later, 300 years later, we see amazing blessings, and you will see it from heaven. God's Therefore, stay faithful.

[26:28] Be faithful to the Lord. Live for His glory. Teach the next generation. Be an example.

Now, I have a few applications at the end of this sermon which I feel are important for us. One thing when we see the story of the sons of Korah and of Korah himself, we need to remind ourselves is that God can turn a curse into a blessing or a blessing into a curse.

Well, Korah himself, he was blessed. He was blessed. He was one of the Levites, but he was not happy with it.

He wanted more. He was discontented with it. And curse followed. Curse followed. The sons of Korah, we see their first curse in their life, but they didn't take grace for granted because grace can never be taken for granted.

If we take grace for granted, we would earn grace and we cannot earn grace. It is always unmerited. Therefore, we want to live in this grace and remind ourselves that it is grace and we want to be thankful for whatever we have.

[28:10] Then secondly, maybe, maybe you come from a family that has a wicked background. And I say to you now, today, a curse can be broken in one generation.

Turn to Christ and the curse is broken. The curse is broken in Christ. And then thirdly and lastly, remind yourself often when you read of the sons of Korah that God loves, God loves to bless painful obedience.

He does do that. And he did it in the lives of the sons of Korah. He's a gracious God to a thousand generations.

Let us pray. Father in heaven, we thank you for the story of the sons of Korah, for this encouragement even for us to see your grace throughout the generations.

And father in heaven, we therefore pray again as we already prayed in this worship service, that you would be gracious to us, that you would circumcise our own hearts and also the hearts of our offspring, of our children, so that we would love you with our whole heart and with our whole soul.

[30:01] Please forgive us all our shortcomings we have, in our lives. Please do not look at these shortcomings, but look at the righteousness of Christ when we bring these pleas before you.

Be merciful to us and to the next generation. Amen. Amen. We want to conclude in singing a portion of Psalm 105 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 105 in the Scottish Psalter, verses 5 to 8, verses 5 to 8, page 374. Think on the works that he hath done, which admiration breed, his wonders and the judgments, all which from his mouth proceed.

O ye that are of Abraham's race, his servant well approved, and ye that Jacob's children are, whom he chose for his own. Psalm 105, 5 to 8.

