

# Active Love of God I: Casting Off Shame

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## Psalm 84:1-12

### Background

To understand this Psalm, you have to first look at the heading:

*To the director of music... Of the sons of Korah..."*

There is a history of the sons of Korah that causes elements of this psalm to make more sense, and have more meaning. Some believe that the sons of Korah actually wrote this psalm while others attribute the writing to David. In any case, the role of the sons of Korah is important to note in the formation of this psalm.

### Who was Korah?

*"Korah, son of... Levi... became insolent... and rose up against Moses... and said to them, you have gone too far!... why do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?" (Numbers 16:1-3)*

Israel had just approached the Promised Land, and experienced the major fail of the spies who brought back the bad report. The people were grumbling and looking for a new leader. Shortly thereafter, Korah steps up to challenge Moses' leadership.

Korah's fate was sealed and his punishment was death by supernatural causes. While not stated in the text, the question arises, "why did he rebel in the first place?"

- Anger: Was it that he was so upset over what appeared to be a betrayal by Moses and God that he refused to give up his anger, and act out on it? (Numbers 14:1-3)
- Pride: Was he using the opportunity of the people's displeasure to assert his own pride? Did he think all along that he should be leader instead of Moses? (Numbers 16:3)
- False Identity: Was he identifying with the way Israel saw themselves compared with the inhabitants of the land, and reacting to that? (Numbers 13:27-33)

### Experiencing Shame

What drove Korah was an experience of shame. To understand it, however, it must be defined, because typically we associate shame with something specifically we have done against the mores of society.

**Shamed defined: *The painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable, improper, ridiculous, etc., done by oneself or another***

Many times we experience shame not because we have done something specifically, but because we are associated with the actions of others, by relation, by proximity, etc. Korah, and the rest of Israel felt that Moses had done something improper and dishonorable when they heard the report of the spies, and had to deal with the painful feelings that ensued. Because shame is painful, it is not anything that we want to live with or endure.

*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, ... who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, scorning [despising] its shame... - Hebrews 12:2*

While we may hate the shame that comes from the experience, our choice of action may in fact keep us under the pain of the shame.

## Shame in the Garden: Adam & Eve

*You will not surely die, the serpent said to the woman. For God knows in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil – Genesis 3:4-5*

We know of the shame that came as a result of being caught in sin, but it is necessary to look at the reaction to the conversation with the serpent to see where the shame first originated, and how we often deal with shame

- **Reason:** *when Eve saw... this gives the disappointing or shameful experience meaning within our own understanding (Genesis 3:6)*
- **Indifference:** *She also gave some to her husband... and he ate it. "Fighting fire with fire", "doing unto others before they do unto you", doing whatever comes to mind, even if you know that it is wrong (Genesis 3:6)*
- **Substitution:** *they made coverings for themselves... we trade the reality of what was, for something that we can manufacture and manage that comes from the shame itself (Genesis 3:7)*

All of these are attempts to reconcile the shame, to live with it. What this does, however is causes us to identify more with the shame than with what really should be. We effectively become the very thing we hate, making it harder to get past it.

## Sons of Korah: Three Perspectives

The sons of Korah could have chosen to live in their father's shadow, being both affected and controlled by their history and legacy. It is the same choice we must face when we deal with our own legacies. What most think is the proper way, however, keeps them locked in a prison of past shame.

- 1) **They didn't deny or hide who they were, but they also didn't let it stop them from being who they could be.** The Korahites became a guild of temple singers. Even though everyone knew and declared who Korah was and what he did, the descendants were able to rise past the sin of the

father and the shame it brought upon the family. Psalm 84 incorporates the history of the sons of Korah in the perspective they chose, rather than hiding or explaining it away

Numbers 16	Psalm 84
<i>Say to the assembly, move away from the tents of Korah... move back from the tents of these wicked men, or you will be swept away because of all of their sins (v24-26)</i>	<i>I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of the wicked (v10)</i>
<i>Isn't it enough for you that God... brought you near Himself... to stand before the community to minister to them? ... Now are you trying to get the priesthood too? (v9-10)</i>	<i>Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere (v10)</i>
<i>The whole community is holy... why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly? (v3)</i>	<i>They go from strength to strength till each appears before God in Zion (v7)</i>

- 2) **Their desire was for the dwelling of God.** They compare the natural state of the birds in their nests to the preferred place near the altar of God. No other place or state of being would make sense or bring meaning to their lives

In the Presence of God	Outside of the Presence of God
<b>No shame before God or each other.</b>	Identification with the implication of their nakedness
<b>Had no reason to hide or cover</b>	Felt the need to cover

- 3) **Those inside and outside had the same result.** Whether a person was a priest, by the altar of God, or “outside of the gate” on their pilgrimage toward God, there was no judgment or shame on either. Both were blessed, both were accepted.

Even in their hurt along the journey, there is covering from the Lord (*the autumn rains also cover it with pools – Psalm 84:6*)

## Redefining the Life

*When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at a Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume... Jesus said to the woman “your faith has saved you. Go in peace” – Luke 7:37-50*

We don't get rid of our shame by sheer strength of will or wishing it away. Rather, we cast it off by coming into the place we are supposed to be, into His presence