

Find Rest in God

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[0 : 00] As you know, stage four restrictions were supposed to end today. And we're supposed to enjoy some freedom tomorrow. In fact, tomorrow is my wife's birthday.

And so that was going to be my present to her. Freedom. Now what am I going to get her? But more seriously, last Sunday's announcement has now meant Melbourne has been awarded with something different.

It's been awarded with one of the world's longest lockdowns. Even longer on your screens than Wuhan, China. Now, while many of us are doing fine in lockdown, which is terrific news, I know many others are finding it difficult.

Their homes, which were once places of refuge and rest, are now becoming places of stress and restlessness. And so as I've spoken to people, it seems everyone is hanging in there.

But many are tired of staring at the same walls. In one case, the same people. Although, to be fair, that person lived by themselves and they only saw themselves in the mirror.

[1 : 10] Others, finding kids are restless and fighting with each other. And it's a real push to do online schooling with an internet that keeps crashing.

Others, finding loneliness or aloneness hard and not being able to see loved ones. Not being able to work or earn an income. And then there's the general restlessness about what's going to happen. Now, I don't want us to dwell too much on these things because we can also get tired of hearing about them all the time. But after last Sunday's announcement, it's right to acknowledge the reality of it.

And also remember that we have a God who is bigger than all of it. And so having finished 1 Peter last week, I thought we'd look at a couple of Psalms this week and next.

And then we'll go to the book of Acts to remember the bigger picture and purpose we have. Today we'll look at a lesser known Psalm and then next week a better known Psalm.

[2 : 18] But today's one tells us how to find rest in a time of stress or restlessness. So point 1 and verse 1.

In the Psalm, it says, Truly or only my soul finds rest in God. My salvation comes from Him. Only He is my rock and my salvation.

He is my fortress. I will never be shaken. They're great words of confidence, aren't they? We're told just below the title that David wrote this Psalm.

And this is his confident claim that he finds rest for his soul. The word find rest or the words find rest are literally one Hebrew word meaning silence.

As it might say in your Bibles at home. But it's the inner silence idea. The peace we have or rest we can experience.

[3 : 17] That's on view. And where does David find his? Not in his home nor in freedom from lockdown. But in God. Why?

Well, because of who God is. God is the source of his salvation. The one who will save him. God is the source of his strength. His rock who upholds him.

And God is the source of his security. His fortress who secures him. This is who God is to David. And it means he will never be shaken.

Verse 2. Or literally, he'll never be greatly shaken. You see, it doesn't mean David will never wobble in life. We'll see him wobble in a moment, actually.

But it does mean he'll never be fully shaken out of God's covenant community. And sometimes we might, you know, shake the last bit of the source out of the bottle.

[4 : 15] You know, you kind of bang the bottle and give it a good shake. Well, no matter how vigorously he is shaken by whatever he faces in life. God will save him, strengthen and secure him.

So that he'll never be fully shaken out of God's bottle. Out of being part of God's people. And knowing this means David can find rest in God.

I've mentioned before our rabbits. We got one. The second one was a one called Peroni. And he was very skittish. You see, he'd been adopted by someone else first.

Who neglected to tell the RSPCA that they also had a cat. A cat who did not like Peroni at all. And so by the time he came to us, he was very traumatized.

He had kind of PTSD, if you like. And so he was very skittish. But not when he was in his cage. Like on your screens.

[5 : 18] It's a bit hard to see him there. And so here he is on the next slide as well. Sitting down at rest. Because to him, his cage is his rock.

His little fortress, if you like. His salvation from other animals. Here he knows he'll never be fully shaken. And so he found rest no matter where he was in the house.

As long as he was in his little fortress. Well, so too, David. God, of course, is not a cage. But his fortress. His rock and salvation.

The one who will keep him from being fully shaken. No matter what he faces in life or where he is. But as I said, this doesn't mean he'll never wobble.

Point two. Because have a look at verse three and four. How long will you assault me? Would all of you throw me down? This leaning wall.

[6 : 18] This tottering fence. Surely they intend to topple me from my lofty place. They take delight in lies. With their mouths they bless.

But in their hearts they curse. David, remember, was the king of Israel. But people were out to get him. To topple him from his lofty place as king.

And they would do it with lies and backstabbing. You know, being two-faced. Blessing with their mouths. Cursing behind his back. Obviously, two-faced politicians is an age-old practice, isn't it?

Though in David's day, a removal from office often came with a removal from life. So this is serious. And he feels it. Because if you look at verse three, did you notice what he calls himself?

A leaning wall. A tottering fence. And not long ago we had huge winds here in Melbourne, didn't we? It was only a couple of weeks ago, I think.

[7 : 22] Now, our fence in our backyard is not the best at the best of times. I think you can see on your screens it has a slight lean to it. And when the wind blew, it was really rocking and tottering.

But you see, that's what suffering can do to us, can't it? It blows and knocks us around. It can make us wobble, lean and totter.

For us, though, it's not people trying to remove us from office. It's often our health issues or, you know, some persecution from work or our plans or lack of work and earning an income.

Our kids, our aloneness or just our general frustration with this extended lockdown. And when these pressures blow, they can make us wobble, can't they?

But when that happens, the first solution, point three, is to talk to yourself. Have a look at verse five to seven. Yes, my soul, go find rest in God.

[8 : 34] My hope comes from him. Only he is my rock and my salvation. He is my fortress. I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God.

He is my mighty rock, my refuge. I realize they say that the first sign of insanity is talking to yourself and the second sign is answering yourself.

But here is biblical permission to talk to yourself. Not about, oh, I must remember to get milk from the shops, but in terms of telling yourself to go to God.

Do you notice what David does? Verse three and four, he wobbles. And then verse five, that's what he does. He tells his soul to find rest in God, to find rest and hope in the one who is his rock and salvation.

And so when we wobble, we are to talk to ourselves and tell ourselves to go to God, whether in prayer or by reading the Bible. I was speaking with someone from church a few weeks ago who said they were getting down with everything they were hearing on the news.

[9 : 49] They were hearing on the news. They were hearing on the news. They were hearing on the news. They were hearing on the news. So one morning they talked to themselves. They told themselves, don't turn on the news or look at it online, but instead use that time to read the Bible.

And as they did, they were reminded of who God is, that he is bigger than COVID and in control. And they were reminded of what God promises, like that in all things, God works for our spiritual

good.

And I asked him, did it help? And they said, yeah, actually, it really did. They found rest in God, you see.

So how are you going at talking to yourself? How are you going at telling yourself to go back to God, whether in prayer or word? God, to remember who he is and what he promises, for it's there we find rest in him.

But despite, sorry, but David adds one more thing in verse seven, actually. He says, did you notice his honor or glory, his worth depends on God as well.

[11:01] And it's the same for us. I think this is really worth remembering, particularly at this time, because I know some who are unable to work at the moment and so feel a lack of worth as a provider.

I know mums who are struggling with homeschooling and so feel a lack of worth as a mother. And I know some older folk who can't do the things they once did and so feel a lack of worth as a contributor.

But our worth, our honor doesn't depend on our job or our success or even what others think of us. It depends, verse seven, on God.

And God has given us great honor and worth in Christ, hasn't he? We heard from one Peter that he God has made us his precious people, his A-listers, if you remember.

And so remembering this truth gives us rest from feeling that lack of worth, doesn't it? And so when we wobble for whatever reason, talk to yourself and tell yourself to go back to God in prayer or his word.

[12:14] To remember who he is and what he promises, for there our souls find rest in him. This is the first solution when we wobble. And the second solution, well, is to trust in God.

Have a look at verse eight. Trust in him at all times, you people. Pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Here we are to trust in God and pour out our hearts to him in prayer.

And notice we are to trust in him at all times, whether good or bad. Now, this doesn't mean we won't use whatever God has given us to try and resolve the problem to.

And David didn't just sit on his hands. But either way, we are to trust God, even when, despite our best efforts, we cannot see an end to our pain or a preferred answer to our prayer.

We are to still trust God. Why? Well, because the alternatives we can trust in are not God. And so they cannot give certain hope of any resolution, which we need, don't we, to find rest.

[13:24] I mean, if we had no hope in life, we always feel anxious, wouldn't we? And restless. A certain hope gives real rest. But the alternatives to God can't give it, so we're not to trust in them.

Alternatives like people, verse 9. He says, Here, the lowborn or poor are but a breath.

And the highborn or rich are but a lie. And so people from low to high, in other words, all people, are nothing compared to God.

Not nothing in terms of worth. I mean, all people have worth because we are all made in God's image. And we Christians have even more worth in Christ. But in terms of being able to offer certain hope, which gives real rest.

I saw an article yesterday where one family's solution to the Melbourne lockdown was to move to Queensland, to get out of here, the article says.

[14:36] As you do. Of course, when you read the article, it says they lived in Turak. Clearly, these are the highborn. But here is their solution, which might sound good to us and promise us hope.

But they didn't offer to move me to Queensland. You? Did you get that offer? No. And so it might sound like a promising way out, but it's of no help to us, really, is it?

Or like our leaders, like Dan Andrews. Early on, he said that groups of 100 could regather by the end of July. And so I relied on him and wrote in one of my letters to you that our first service back would be the 2nd of August, the next Sunday.

But so much for that. Now, I'm not having a go at Dan. Rather, the point is whether people are highborn in wealth, like the family at Turak, or highborn in office, like Dan Andrews.

They may hold out the promise of hope and rest, but it turns out to be but a lie. Because no matter how hard they try, they can't guarantee to deliver.

[15:49] Because they're not God. In fact, when weighed on the scales, or verse 9, the balance, people are nothing compared to God. That's the difference.

I mean, the next time you get out your kitchen scales, breathe on them and see what comes up. I bet it still remains zero. But if you pick up a rock, a rock like God, and put it on the scales, well, I bet you'll see something then.

Because God is our rock, but people are but breath. And so we ought to put our trust in God to find hope and rest in life. And not people, nor wealth.

Have a look at verse 10. Do not trust in extortion, or put vain hope in stolen goods. Though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them, he says.

And notice here, we're told that wealth is a vain hope, an empty hope. Because it too is uncertain. It comes and goes, doesn't it?

[16:54] Actually, wealth, I've found, goes much quicker than it comes. Or is that just me? And those who can keep their wealth, they don't find rest either.

Instead, they just want more, don't they? And stolen wealth? Well, that often lands you in trouble, not rest. When JobKeeper first came out, people were roting the system, stealing from their employees.

And so the owners were putting their business hopes in stolen goods, if you like. But there are a number of articles like this one on your screens that's warned they will be pinned for it.

The ATO will get them. The truth often comes out, doesn't it? And even if they get away with it in this life, it will give them no hope for the next.

Because once we die, that's it. We can't take money with us. And more than that, they will have to give an account to God for their conduct. And so to hope in wealth, verse 10, is to have a vain hope, an empty hope.

[18:04] You see what David's saying in these verses? Don't trust in people, verse 9, or wealth, verse 10, because they cannot give certain hope, which means they cannot give real rest, peace for us.

Rather, trust in God who can, because his power, love, and reward are certain. Have a look at verse 11 and 12.

One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard. Power belongs to you, God. And with you, Lord, is unfailing love. And you reward everyone according to what they have done.

I first thought that funny phrase in verse 11, you know, one thing spoken, two things heard. I thought that meant we had to do a bit of mathematics. You know, one plus two equals three things. And we've got God's power, love, and reward. You know, three things. But apparently, it's actually a literary device that writers would use to say something is certain.

[19:10] You know, it's not only been spoken once, it's also been heard twice. It's really certain. You can bank on it. And here, what's certain is God's power, love, and reward.

We can be certain God has the power to strengthen, secure, and save us as our rock, fortress, and salvation, which gives us hope, doesn't it?

He has the power to hear and answer our prayers, to provide for our needs when we pour out our hearts to Him. What's also certain, though, is His deep, unfailing love for us, which means we can know He'll use His power for our good, to work for our spiritual good, in fact.

Sometimes, though, that will even include letting us wobble in the wind, to force us to trust in Him. And this really is for our good, because what's also certain is His reward.

That He will reward everyone according to what they have done, which in this psalm means rewarding those who trust in Him, like David, with vindication. But rewarding, or perhaps repaying, those who don't trust in Him, those who oppose His chosen King, like David, well, rewarding them with judgment.

[20:40] But the point is, since God's power, love, and reward are certain, then He can also give us certain hope in life. The hope of being strengthened and kept, never fully shaken.

The hope of being saved and rewarded in the future, all of which gives us real rest and peace in the present, doesn't it?

So who better to trust in? Who better to go to, to find rest in life? Not people, not wealth, but God. Of course, for us as Christians, Christ only makes our hope more certain, doesn't He? Such that we are now told to come to Christ in order to find rest.

We heard this from our second reading, which is on your screens. Jesus said, As you know, Jesus died to pay for our sins.

[21 : 52] And by doing so, He has secured for us eternal rest for our souls. That is, eternal life. Which in turn gives us rest or peace in this life.

Rest is used two different ways there. But it means we can have rest in this life from trying to earn our way to heaven. Because our hope of heaven is secure in Christ, not dependent on us. We can have rest from trying to do life alone. Because now, God is not just our God. He's also our heavenly Father. And so how much more certain can we be that He'll use His power for our good? To provide for our needs. To grow us in Christ. To never let us be fully shaken, no matter what we face in life. And rest from worrying about missing out on things in this life, or facing judgment in the next.

Because Jesus' death has again secured our eternal life. So we can be even more certain of being rewarded. And not with judgment, but with vindication and a new creation.

[23 : 12] Someone said that by the end of all this COVID crisis, we'll have all basically, at one level, lost a year of our lives. And with it, all our travel destinations, our kids' education, and all those birthday celebrations.

And we've had a number of people at our church celebrate their 90th birthday alone over the last couple of months. They've missed out on that. But in Christ, we have rest from that worry of missing out.

For we have an eternal future that will more than make up for it, don't we? One where we don't need a good VCE result to enter. One where we can celebrate not just each other's 90th birthday, but 9 millionth birthday.

And with a perfect body. And one where we'll have time to travel the whole world for free. Which, given the current costs of plane tickets, is great news.

The point is, Christ makes our hope in life more certain, which gives us real rest. And so who better to trust in?

[24 : 21] I saw another ABC article yesterday, which said this extended lockdown has left many of us Melburnians feeling broken.

And it was a nice article. But the two best solutions the writer could give us were these. First, if we're having crazy dreams, to go to an article where some AI, some artificial intelligence program, tries to tell you what they mean.

Okay, fair enough. And the second solution, to listen to some music from Max Richter or Bruce Springsteen, who just released a single on Friday, to help us rest and sleep.

All right. But that's it. They were the two best solutions the writer could offer us Melburnians. Of course, many other Melburnians put their hope in the dropping COVID case numbers and rest in the promise that it might mean our restrictions end sooner.

I pray they do. But it's not certain, is it? But this psalm gives us too much better solutions, doesn't it? When we wobble or feel restless first, talk to yourselves.

[25 : 40] Tell yourselves to go back to God, remembering who he is and what he promises. And second, trust in Christ at all times, for he has given us certain hope.

And by doing those two things, we can find real rest in him. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we pray with the psalmist.

Yes, my soul, find rest in Christ, my rock and salvation. Trust in him at all times, for our hope comes from him alone.

Help us to do this, we pray, especially when we wobble or feel restless. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.