

Find Rest in God

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[0 : 00] So back in 2011 to 2017, I don't know if you realize, but Melbourne won the award as the most livable city in the world. And it even came second last year. But it feels a bit different this year, doesn't it? As you know, stage four restrictions were supposed to end today.

And we were supposed to have a bit of freedom tomorrow. In fact, it's my wife Michelle's birthday tomorrow. And so that was going to be my present to her, you know, freedom. Now, what am I going to get her? But more seriously, after last Sunday's announcement, Melbourne has now been awarded with one of the world's longest lockdowns, it says on your screen there, longer than even where the virus came from. Now, I don't know how you answered the question that didn't appear about how you're handling lockdown. And I know that most people, you know, people are hanging in there and some are doing okay. But I also know for many of us, it's becoming quite tiring.

For some of us, our homes, which were once places of refuge and rest, are becoming places of stress and restlessness. And so as I've spoken to people from church, generally the vibe is, yeah, we're going okay. But it is wearing. Some people are tired of staring at the same walls, even introverts are becoming tired. In one case, someone said, tired of staring at the same people.

Although to be fair, she lives alone. And so she was talking about herself, just staring at herself in the mirror, which is, you know, not great being isolated like that either. For others, it's kids who are restless and fighting with each other, perhaps even now in the background with online church, or having to push them to do online schooling when the internet keeps crashing.

For others, it's being alone or not being able to see loved ones. For others still, it's not being able to work and earn an income. And then there's, of course, the general restlessness of what's going to happen. Now, I don't want us to dwell on these things too much, because we can also get tired of hearing about it, can't we? But after last Sunday's announcement, it's right to acknowledge it.

[2 : 27] And more than that, to remember our God, who is bigger than all of it. So having finished 1 Peter last week, I thought we'd look at a couple of Psalms this week and next week. Then we'd go to the book of Acts to remember the bigger picture and our bigger purpose in life.

So today we're going to look at, well, it's probably a lesser known Psalm and next week a better known Psalm. But today's one tells us how we can find rest in a time of restlessness.

So point 1 on your screens and then verse 1 in your Bibles. David, Psalm of David, and he writes, 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? David, who wrote it, this is his confident claim that his soul finds rest. The words, by the way, find rest, are literally from one Hebrew word that means silence. It might say that in your Bibles at home. But it's that inner silence, that peace or rest that David's soul finds here. And where does he find it? Well, not in his home, nor freedom from lockdown, but in God, it says. Why? Well, because of who God is. It says that 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, the one who, his fortress who secures him. This is who God is to David. And so it means he will never be shaken. I literally never be greatly shaken. The end of verse two should say, you see, it doesn't mean David will never wobble in life. We'll see him wobble in a moment, but it does mean he'll never be fully shaken out of God's covenant community. You know how sometimes we have a bit of sauce left in the bottle and we kind of shake the bottle, whack it to try and get that last bit out. Well, no matter how vigorously David is shaken in life, he'll never be fully shaken out of God's bottle and have been part of God's people, if you like. And knowing this means David's soul can find peace or rest in God. I've mentioned before our rabbits, when we got our second one called Peroni, he was very skittish. You see, he'd been adopted by someone else before he came to us and that someone else didn't tell the RSPCA that they also had a cat who did not like Peroni at all. So by the time Peroni came to us, he was very traumatized.

You know, he had a bit of PTSD, if you like. But now when he put him in his cage, like you can see on the screen, well, it's a bit hard to see. So maybe the next slide. There he is and he's at rest. He's not skittish at all. Why? Well, because to him, his cage is his rock, his little fortress, his salvation from other animals, if you like. Here he knew he'd never be fully shaken. And so he found rest in his fortress, no matter where he was in the house. Or so too, David. God is not a cage, of course, but God is his fortress, his rock and salvation, the one who will keep him from being fully shaken, no matter where he is in life or what he faces. But as I said, this doesn't mean he'll never wobble.

[6 : 30] Point two. Have a look there at verses three and four. How long will you assault me? Would all of you throw me down this leaning wall, 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. I remember David was king of Israel, but it seems people are out to get him, to topple him from his lofty place as king by telling lies and backstabbing, you know, blessing to his face and 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, doesn't he? Because if you look in verse three, what does he call himself? This leaning wall, this tottering, wobbly fence. And not long ago, we had huge winds here in Melbourne.

I don't know if you remember that. It was only a couple of weeks ago. And our fence in our backyard at the best of times is a bit tottery, a bit wobbly. So I think you can see it on your screens there, a picture of it. But when it was windy the other week, it was really rocking and tottering. And that's what suffering can do to us, can't it?

It can blow and knock us around. It can make us wobble, can't it? Lean and totter. Though for us, it's not from people trying to remove us from office, although we may feel other persecution for being Christians.

[8 : 17] Often for us, it's our health issues, our plans being put on hold, our lack of work, difficulty with kids or being alone, or a 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. He says, They say the first sign of insanity is talking to yourself.

And the second sign is answering. But here is biblical permission to talk to yourself. I don't know if those two camera angles worked, if it made it look like I was talking to myself, but that's what David does here, doesn't he?

In verse three to four, he's wobbling. And so verse five, he tells his soul to go and find rest in God.

[9 : 44] To find rest and hope in the one who is his rock, his fortress, his salvation. And so when we wobble, we are to talk to ourselves, tell ourselves to go to God.

And not just to remember the milk from the shops, but to go to God, whether in prayer or by reading his word. I was speaking with someone from our church a few weeks ago who said they were feeling a bit down and flat, constantly hearing these daily COVID case numbers and the like.

And so one morning they talked to themselves. They told themselves not to watch the news, but 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 still in control. And they're reminded of what God promises, that in all things, God works for our good, our spiritual good.

And I asked them, did it help? And they said, yeah, actually, it really did. You see, they found rest, peace for their soul.

[10 : 57] And so how are you going at talking to yourself? How are you going at telling yourself to go back to God in prayer or word? To remember who he is and what he promises?

Because it's there you'll find rest in God. But David adds one more thing in verse seven. He also says that his honor or glory, his worth, depends on God.

And it's the same for us too. I know some who are unable to work at the moment, and so they feel a lack of worth as a provider. I know other moms who are struggling with homeschooling, and so they feel a lack of worth as a mother.

And I know some older folk who can no longer do what they used to be able to do. And so they feel a lack of worth as a contributor. But our worth or honor does not depend on our job or how successful we are at it or in life or even what others think of ourself.

Verse seven, no, our honor, like David, depends on God. And God has given us great honor in Christ, hasn't he?

[12 : 12] As we heard from 1 Peter series, God has made us his precious people, his A-listers, if you remember. And so being reminded of this truth gives us rest from feeling that lack of worth, doesn't it?

So when we wobble, for whatever reason, talk to yourself. Tell yourself to go back to God in prayer or word, to remember who he is and what he promises.

For there we can find rest in him. This is the first solution when we wobble, but the psalm gives us a second solution. So point four, trust in God.

Have a look at verse eight. He says, trust in him at all times, you people. Pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

And here we are to trust in God. Pour out our hearts to him in prayer. And notice we're to trust in God at all times, in the good and the bad.

[13 : 16] Now, this doesn't mean we don't use whatever God has given us to try and resolve issues as well. David didn't just sit on his hands.

But either way, whether it works or not, we are to keep trusting in God. Even when, despite our best efforts, we can't 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 they cannot give us a certain hope of any resolution, which in turn offers us no real rest in this life.

I mean, if we have no hope in life, then we'll always be feeling anxious, won't we? Restless. Certain hope gives real rest.

But the alternatives to God that we can trust in, well, they just can't give that sort of hope. And the first alternative we are not to trust in, well, verse nine is people.

[14 : 25] Have a look at verse nine. Surely the low born are but a breath. The high born are but a lie. If weighed on a balance, they are nothing. Together, they are only a breath.

The low born or the poor are but a breath. The high born or rich are but a lie. So in other words, people from low to high are nothing compared to God.

And not nothing in terms of worth. Remember, all people have worth because all people are made in God's image. And we as Christians have even greater worth in Christ.

No, no, no. People are nothing in terms of being able to offer certain hope that gives real rest. I saw an article yesterday where on your screens, one family solution to Melbourne lockdown was to get out of Melbourne and to move to Queensland.

That's where they went, as you do. Of course, when you read the article, it tells us that they lived in Turak. So clearly they are the high born people.

[15 : 31] But this is their solution, which might sound good and offer hope. But it doesn't really to us, does it? I mean, did they offer to move you to Queensland?

I didn't get any offer. And so while it might sound promising, it's not really all that helpful for us, is it? Or take our leaders like Dan Andrews. Early on, he said that groups of 100 could regather by the end of July.

This was quite some months ago, he said this. And so I relied on him and wrote in one of my letters to you at the church that our first Sunday back would be the 2nd of August, the very next Sunday.

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

They may hold out the promise of hope, but they just can't deliver. It's a lie. No matter how hard they try, they cannot give us certain hope because they're not God.

[16 : 42] In fact, when weighed on scales or a balance, verse 9, people are nothing compared to God. And the next time you get your kitchen scales out, breathe on them and see what your breath weighs.

I bet it's zero. But if you put a rock on the scales like God, I bet it will show something then. God is our rock.

People are but a breath. And so we're to put our trust in God to find hope and rest. Not in people, nor in 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.

You see, wealth is a vain or empty hope because it's also uncertain. And wealth comes and goes, doesn't it? Actually, wealth seems to go much quicker than it comes in.

[17 : 45] Or is that just me? All those who can keep their wealth, though, they don't find rest either. Because those people just seem to want more, don't they?

And as for stolen wealth that verse 10 talks about, well, it often lands you in trouble, not in rest. And when JobKeeper first came out, people were robbing the system, stealing from their employees.

You see, the owners of businesses were putting their business hopes on stolen goods, if you like. But there were a number of articles like this one on your screens warning that the ATO will get you.

You know, the truth often comes out, doesn't it? And even if they get away with it in this life, their stolen goods won't give them any hope for the next.

In fact, 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 : 48] And so do you see what David's saying in these verses? Don't trust in people, verse 9, or wealth, verse 10, because they cannot give us certain hope.

Which means they cannot give us real rest in life either. Rather, trust in God who can give both. Because his power, love and reward are certain.

Have a look at verses 11 to 12. One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard. Power belongs to you, O God. And with you, Lord, is unfailing love.

And you reward everyone according to what they have done. When I first read verse 11, I thought, you know, one thing spoken, two things heard.

I thought we'd have to do a bit of mathematics, you know. One plus two equals three things. And there are three things there. There's power, love and reward. But it's actually not what's going on here.

[19 : 52] The one thing and two thing is actually a literary device that writers would use to say something is certain. You know, once it's been spoken and twice it's been heard.

So it's really certain you can bank on it. And what we can bank on here is God's power, love and reward. We can be certain God has the power to strengthen, secure and save us as our rock, our fortress, our salvation.

And that gives us hope in life, doesn't it? He has the power to hear and answer our prayers and to provide for our needs when we pour out our hearts to him.

What's more, just as certain is his deep, unfailing love for us. And so that we can know he will use his power for our good.

Sometimes, though, that will even include letting us wobble in the wind to force us to trust and find rest, not in other things, but in him.

[21 : 05] And this really is for our good, because what's also certain is he'll reward everyone according to what they've done, which in this psalm means rewarding those who trust in him like David with vindication.

David will stay God's king. Or rewarding or perhaps repaying those who don't trust in him, those who oppose God's chosen king.

Rewarding them with judgment. The point is, though, 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 such that we'll never be fully shaken. The hope of being saved and rewarded in the future. All of which gives us real rest in the present, doesn't it?

So who better to trust in? Who better to go to to find rest and peace? Not people, not wealth, but God.

[22 : 10] 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 to find rest. And so we heard in our second reading on your screens there, Jesus said, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Eternal rest.

See, Jesus died to pay for our sins, as you know. But by doing so, he has secured eternal rest for our souls. That is, eternal life.

Which in turn gives us peace or rest in this life. Rest from trying to earn our way to heaven.

Because our hope of heaven is secure in Christ and not dependent on us, which is a great relief. Great peace, great rest, isn't it? Rest from trying to do life alone, because now God is not just our God, but our heavenly Father.

[23 : 18] So how much more certain can we be that he'll use his power for our good, for our spiritual good? And rest from worrying about missing out on things in life, or facing judgment in the next.

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

Remember, Jesus said the meek will inherit the earth. Someone has said that by the end of this COVID crisis, we'll have all at one level lost a whole year of our lives.

And with it, all our travel destinations, our kids' education and birthday celebrations and so on. In fact, we've had a number of people at our church turn 90 in the last couple of months, and they've celebrated alone.

But in Christ, we have rest from the worry that we've missed out. For we have an eternal future that will more than make up for it. One where we don't need a good VCE result to enter.

[24 : 35] One where we can celebrate not each other's 90th birthday, but 9 millionth birthday. And with a perfect body. And one where we will 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? I saw another ABC article, which I'll end with, yesterday. And the title says, Extended coronavirus lockdown has left many of us Melbournians feeling broken.

And it was a nice article. The tone was very empathetic. But the two best solutions the writer could come up with for us were, firstly, if we are having crazy dreams, apparently many people are, then to go to some AI, artificial intelligence program, that can tell you what they mean.

Right. Okay. That's the one solution. And the second solution on the next slide, is if we're having trouble resting or sleeping, then listen to some music.

[25 : 48] Perhaps from Max Richter. Or, down the bottom there, from Bruce Springsteen, who just released his latest single on Friday. But those two solutions are the best she could offer.

Of course, for many other Melbournians, their hope is in the dropping COVID case numbers. And they are resting on the promise that it might end restrictions sooner.

I pray it does. But it's not certain, is it? And so, this psalm gives us too much better solutions, doesn't it?

When we wobble or feel restless, first, talk to yourselves. Tell yourselves to go to God, either in prayer or word, to remember who He is and what He promises.

And second, to trust in Christ at all times, for He has given us certain hope. And so, by doing those two things, we can find rest in Him.

[27 : 01] Let's pray we would. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank You for this reminder this morning. That when we feel restless, when we wobble because of our circumstances, that we are to talk to ourselves, tell ourselves to go back to You, to remember who You are and what You promise.

and that we are to trust in You and Your Son as our rock and refuge, knowing that He's made our future hope all the more certain, which can give us real rest in this life.

And so, with the psalmist, we say, 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, in Jesus' name. Amen.