

He is my fortress and will never be shaken. At the same time as you feel like a leaning wall, a 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. You see, when you read verses 1 and 2, you might think to yourself, that's the life I want.

And ignore verses 3 and 4. Or you might read verses 1 and 2 and think, that isn't my life because I feel more like a tottering wall.

[6 : 22] Or what is it? A leaning wall or a tottering fence. My trust in God doesn't feel very stable. My life feels in a mess.

I'm about to fall over. Or you might think, when you hear, truly my soul finds rest in God, well, that's what I ought to feel.

That's my duty to feel that. And not notice the feeling of being a leaning wall or a tottering fence. The remarkable thing about this psalm is that both are true. Truly my soul finds rest in God. My salvation comes from him.

Truly he is my rock and my salvation. He is my fortress. I will never be shaken. And how long will you assault me?

[7 : 32] Would all of you throw me down? This leaning wall, this tottering fence. And if you think about it, why else would he need to say of God, he is my rock and my salvation and my fortress.

I will never be shaken. Why is it so important? If he didn't feel at the same time like a leaning wall and a tottering fence? It's remarkable, isn't it?

How the Bible, God through the Bible, joins together what we think would be entirely separate experiences. You're either a Christian who goes around cheerfully whistling, truly my soul finds rest in God.

Or you go around feeling like a leaning wall and a tottering fence. This psalm brings together what we find very hard to hold together.

But I hope to show you, actually, God's gift, God's kindness, God's generosity, God's patience, are most fully experienced by those who feel like a fairly dodgy wall or a tottering fence.

[8 : 55] That is, the more we feel our weakness and know our weakness and vulnerability and danger and anguish and sadness, the more we will know that our soul finds rest in God, that our salvation comes from him.

Truly, he is our rock, our salvation, our fortress, and we will never be shaken. Notice, too, that though in verse 1 the psalmist says, truly my soul finds rest in God, in verse 5, he has to instruct himself to do this.

Talking to himself is a good thing. Talking to yourself is a good thing to do. He talks to himself and says, yes, my soul, find rest in God. You might think, well, it just comes so naturally and automatically to this man.

He's just in this kind of spiritual high point where his soul always finds rest in God and his salvation always comes from God. He just lives on that kind of higher plane, that higher Christian life.

He doesn't need to remind himself, but he does. There it is in verse 5. Yes, my soul, find rest in God.

[10 : 22] My hope comes from him. For truly he is my rock and my salvation. He is my fortress, so I will not be shaken. He's reminding himself, my salvation and my honour depend on God.

He is my mighty rock, my refuge. And then, this is so wonderful, his experience, he then wants other people to share. Isn't this good?

Look at verse 8. Trust in him at all times, you people. Pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

But then he faces the dark side of his life. Surely the low-born are but a breath, the high-born are but a lie. If weighed in a balance, they're nothing.

Together they're only a breath. He's saying, well, these enemies of mine, whether they're high-born or low-one, it doesn't matter. They're just a breath compared with the mighty power of God, our fortress.

[11 : 27] And he says, to himself, to them, do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods, though your riches increase. Do not set your heart on them.

That is the danger they're in. His enemies, who are trying to push him down, they're in real danger, actually, when he is not. For he's heard the word of God.

Two words of God. Verse 11 and 12. One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard. The first, power belongs to you, God, and with you is unfailing love and you reward everyone according to what they have done.

What wonderful words of God to shape his life and our lives. Power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is unfailing love.

You could have, we could have, a God who was powerful but whose love was not unfailing.

[12:39] Or we could have a God whose love was not unfailing but didn't have power. But, power belongs to you, God, and with you, Lord, is unfailing love.

And, God, God, God, deals with people as they live. You reward everyone according to what they have done. Salvation is by grace a free gift but judgment is by works and the wicked will suffer for what they have done and the righteous will be rewarded.

And, so, what a rich combination this life of faith in God is.

Praise grace and patience grace and grief and grief faith and frustration adoration and anger praise and protest.

And what is the lesson we're meant to learn from this psalm? It's very clear in verse 8, isn't it? Trust in him at all times, you people.

[14:43] Pour out your hearts to him for God is our refuge. If we trust in, we will pour out.

if we trust in God, we will pour out our hearts to God. We trust in God and we pour out.

Because we trust in God, we can pour out our hearts in unfiltered prayer to God. Prayers of anger or frustration of grief and sorrow of lament and protest.

And indeed, the sign that we trust in God is that we do pour out our hearts. A sign of faith is pouring out your heart to God.

And we can safely pour out our hearts to God because he is a God in whom we trust.

[15:56] Listen to these words from the Old Testament. Psalm 42, I pour out my soul. Psalm 142, I pour out my complaint before him.

I tell my trouble before him. Or Job, my groanings are poured out like water. Or Job again, my eyes pour out tears to God.

Or Hannah in 1 Samuel 1, I've been pouring out my soul before the Lord. For, as we learn in Ecclesiastes 3, there is a time to weep and a time to mourn.

A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. Or Jeremiah 20, I think that the strongest words of protest to God in the whole of the Bible, O Lord, you have deceived me and I was deceived.

That's a shocking thing to say to God, isn't it? You've deceived me and I was deceived. Yet this is the prophet of whom God said in chapter 1, I will put my words in his mouth.

[17:32] Or Habakkuk, the prophet Habakkuk in chapter 1, O Lord, how long will I cry for help and you will not hear or cry out to you violence and you will not save.

Though the great message of the Bible is that God does hear and does save, Habakkuk's experience at that time, at that moment, is how long will I cry for help and you will not hear or cry out to you violence and you will not save.

Or think of the life of Jesus. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

Jesus was a man acquainted with sorrow and grief and at the climax of his life on the cross, he called out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And Paul writes, I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart for my kinsmen according to the flesh who have the Old Testament but don't know the Jesus to whom this Old Testament points.

[19:04] Amen. How wonderful that Paul describes God in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 as the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation.

The God of all consolation, all consolation means as much consolation as you need, all consolation, all kinds of consolation.

as much as you need and whatever consolation you need, God will provide for he is the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation.

And God is a God who delights in caring for us in our weakness and anger and frustration and anguish and our lament and our protest about our lives or about the progress of the gospel or about the church or about the world.

I listen to the news each night and the news in Australia is just as bad as it is here and the newsreader always says good evening and then tells you for the next 30 minutes why it isn't a good evening because there's more fighting around the world and there's been a car crash and it's bad weather and more people are dying of this particular disease and so and it's relentless bad news. [20 : 57] Well how do you cope with all that bad news? You might try and bear it yourself just be strong or it might turn you against God or you might need to pour out your heart to a Christian sister or brother and that's a good thing to do but the most important thing to do is to pour out our grief and lament and protest to God.

If we don't do that dear friends if we hold it in it will damage us and if we try and use other people as God the people who are strong enough to take our protest and lament will damage them. No God is the one who is strong enough to hear all our unfiltered prayers and still care for us and love us and as he has opened his heart to him to us in the Lord Jesus Christ so he wants us to respond and open our hearts to him.

Thank you.

There are churches where if somebody asks you how you are there's a kind of unwritten rule that you have to say doing really well thank you.

[22 : 51] Everything's fine. There are churches where pouring out grief is regarded as highly inappropriate behaviour.

And yet Paul writes in Romans 12 let love be genuine love one another with brotherly affection rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Well I hope that's your experience in this church shared joy and shared sorrow shared joy and shared sorrow.

our tradition I think in Western Christianity in the last 100 years at least has been don't display your emotions in church.

age. So there's a wonderful novel by L.P. Hartley called A Perfect Woman about a family of four who've gone through horrendous crises throughout the book.

[24 : 16] And then on the last page he describes them in this way on a Sunday morning. they assembled in the hall a pious quartet with stiffened Sunday faces.

That is faces which weren't going to betray anything of what was inside them. How sad that is. Paul's vision of a Sunday morning is much richer isn't it?

Rejoice with those who rejoice. and weep with those who weep. So this psalm teaches us to trust in God and so to pour out our hearts to him.

To show that we trust him by pouring out our hearts to him. and pouring out our hearts to him because we do and can trust him.

For God is our refuge. In the old days we used to have memory verses.

[25 : 43] memory And I think memory verses are a terrific plan for a Christian to have. I think learning a memory verse a week is a great thing to do because then when you need it, it's ready for you.

And when someone else needs it, it's ready on your lips for them. So here's your memory verse for the week.

Trust in him at all times, you people. Pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. It's verse 8, so Psalm 62, verse 8.

Let's say it together. Trust in him at all times, you people. Pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

Let's do it again. We're doing it for ourselves and for others. Together, trust in him at all times, you people.

[26 : 48] Pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Now, on the second page of the sermon outline, you'll find a prayer, and this is a prayer of response to what God has just said to us.

If God has spoken to us, I believe he has through this psalm, then the very first thing we should do is to respond to him. So, would you please stand and we'll say this prayer together.

Amen. together.

Gracious and loving heavenly Father, we wait on you for our hope is in you. We thank you that your son, the Lord Jesus, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and that he promised that those who mourn will be comforted.

We thank you that he wept at the grave of Lazarus. He wept over Jerusalem and cried out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me on the cross? We praise you that you heard his prayers, loud cries and tears, and that through his suffering he became the source of salvation to all who obey him. We trust you, our rock and refuge, and so we pour out our hearts to you in anger, fear, frustration, grief, protest, resentment, sorrow, suffering, or weakness about ourselves, those we love, the church, or the world.

[28 : 49] Please be for us the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, and hear and answer our prayers in the name of Jesus, your Son. Amen.