

Psalm 23:2-3

by Carl Armerding

Carl Armerding's sermon on Psalm 23:2-3 emphasizes the importance of finding rest and restoration in God's presence.

Duration: 52:57

Scripture: Psalm 23:2, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:28, Mark 6:31, John 10:11, Hebrews 11:32-40, James 5:13

Topics: "Restoration"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the challenges and weariness of life, particularly in the context of raising children. They mention their own mother's experience with ten children and how they were not always well-behaved. The speaker emphasizes the importance of spiritual refreshment and protection for children in a world filled with negative influences. They draw on the imagery of peaceful waters and the Holy Spirit to highlight the soothing and transformative power of God's Word. The sermon concludes with a song that speaks of finding strength and trust in Jesus through all trials and difficulties.

Transcript

Amen. Number 86 is, or 217 rather, is a request number this morning. If you do have a request that you'd like us to change, just be sure to tell me about it, and I'll try to work it in during your week.

Number 217, a little chorus here, save the mind, save the mind in the hollow of his hand. Let's begin, and let's take those two cards there. Dick, how about you sit in here? Do you want to be able to take one? Right here, save the mind, save the mind.

He said the second phase of the mind. Well, that's right on the top. All right, it's Monday morning, Dick, don't you know? All right, here we go.

All right. Save the mind, save the mind. Let's turn on the machine, and we're going to sing this little song we had for the last couple of years.

On the mountaintop above the world below, we blessed old Sally Lohman long ago. Let's take these two changes. On the mountaintop above the world below, we blessed old Sally Lohman long ago.

But he's that great, he's very impetuous, he never lets you know when you're supposed to sing just before the meeting. A new song that I heard recently, and the words thrill my heart. It is to experience that extra grace of God through trying times.

Beverly's never played it before, and I've never sung it before. Would you listen to the words this morning? Because I think you'll hear that the words are important, regardless of how the music comes out. The words are the important thing.

Listen to the message of this song, and fall through it all. I've had many tears and sorrows. I've had questions for tomorrow.

There've been times I didn't know right from wrong. But in every situation, God gave splendid consolation. That my trials come to only make me strong.

Through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus. I've learned to trust in God. Through it all, I've learned to depend upon his word.

I've been to lots of places, and I've seen a lot of faces. There've been times I felt so all alone. But in my lonely hours, yes those precious lonely hours, Jesus let me know I was his own.

Through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus. I've learned to trust in God. I've learned to depend upon his word.

I thank God for those mountains. Yes, I thank him for those valleys. Yes, I thank him for those storms he sent my way.

For if I'd never had a problem, I would know that he could solve them. I'd never know what faith in God could do. Through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus.

I've learned to trust in God. Through it all, through it all, yes I've learned to depend upon his word. Thank you very much Larry, marvelous.

We'll try, all right? Oh, here we go. Mistake. Where's John? That must be John saying anything.

All right, let's go ahead and take it again now, ready? It's the word of God. Our speaker for this morning, our beloved Dr. Carl Armitage from Dallas, Texas. Now, yesterday, we're going to devote these morning studies to the 23rd Psalm.

Yesterday morning, we looked at the whole Psalm itself. That is, we read the, we recited the whole Psalm, I should say. But we just looked at verse 1, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

And we took time to identify the shepherd, or at least let him identify himself, as we found it in the 10th chapter of John's Gospel. And then we looked at that little expression, I shall not want, as being an expression of complete satisfaction in him. This morning, I would like to talk on verses 2 and 3 of Psalm 23.

For he maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness. He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. You'll notice that it doesn't say here that he leads me into these pastures to graze.

While that is true, no doubt that's implied in the expression, I shall not want. But here it says, he maketh me to lie down in green pastures. In other words, what we have here is not so much feeding as resting.

And we find that our Lord Jesus, on at least two occasions in the New Testament, invited people to come and rest in him. A beautiful expression in the 11th chapter of Matthew, with which we're all so very familiar. And the Lord Jesus stood up there, in the midst of a restless world, even his day, and said, Come unto me, all ye that labor in the heavy laden.

And I will give you rest. Then on another occasion, remember in the 6th chapter of Mark, he said, Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile. And this, I take it, is one of the great necessities of the day in which we live.

We're living in a very restless age. And sometimes we contribute to this more than we think. We make, shall I say, the restlessness.

We don't seem to be able to sit down quiet and take it easy. To meditate on the things of God. There has to be something going on all the time.

I was in a home not long ago, where I found that they were running the radio or the record player, about every moment that they were awake, it was gone. They even just subdued it during family worship. Didn't turn it off.

Just subdued it. Had to have what the head of the house called background music, mind you, for the family devotions. To me, this was so out of keeping with what we have in the Word of God, that the Lord does want his people to come aside and rest awhile.

And I'm sure as I speak to you this morning on this line, I'm talking about something with which you're at least familiar. Because this is something which is stressed in many conferences to which I go. The time for the quiet time.

Get alone with the Lord. Sometimes this means getting up a little early in the morning. But for those of us who've been practicing this for a long time, we haven't found it a hardship at all to get up early in the morning to have a little time with the Lord.

Sometimes only 15 minutes, or sometimes a half an hour. But how wonderful to spend time in his presence before we go out into the business of the day. I was very fortunate, very greatly blessed, I'll use that word rather than the word fortunate, in the life companion that my Lord gave to me for 47 and a half years.

To come home after a busy day, and we had busy days. Not so busy now, but they were busy then. And come back and have her meet you at the door.

And look at you, say you look tired. I've got a cup of tea already placed, you know. And then just to sit down and to enjoy a serene time of fellowship together.

This is wonderful. And it's something so refreshing about it. You look forward to it.

And this is the way it should be with our Lord. Instead of thinking about it as an obligation, that we come into his presence in the morning and have what we call our daily devotions. Let it be something to which we really look forward to.

This is going to be one of the most pleasant experiences of the day. It's just to have him make us lie down in these green pastures. You see the green pastures not only serve the purpose of providing food, but

they also serve the purpose of providing atmosphere.

There's something about these green pastures that's very soothing, very lovely. I've come here to your part of the world, because I live in a part of the world where we have a lot of drought. The western part of my home state now, Texas, is really suffering.

And it's disturbing to go out there and see it. To realize that the farmers who have sown their seeds there will lose the whole thing, because they don't have rain. You come into a part of the world such as you live in here, in Virginia and Tennessee, North Carolina, these places.

We thank God for the verdant atmosphere that you have, beautiful. Well, this is what God would have us enjoy if we come into his Holy Word. So that the Scripture becomes something more than a dry book.

It comes to us a green pasture to which we go not so much to, shall I say, feed, but rather to enjoy the surroundings into which the Spirit of God brings us. He makes me lie down in these green pastures. Yes, he invites us to take a rest.

And I dare say that if we followed this advice on the Word of God, there'd be less of these nervous frustrations that we hear about, and less need for these tranquilizers that we hear about. And the Lord knows I paid enough money for tranquilizers down the years, because my loved ones suffered and needed these things. And I'm very grateful that the doctors were able to prescribe something that gave us moments of peace and relaxation.

But normally this should not be necessary at all. You and I should find our relaxation in the presence of the Lord himself. Whether we do this at the beginning of the day, and I would suggest that this is the better part of the day to do it, but not limiting it to that, but to have it perhaps in the middle of the day.

Yes, well I realize we have only about a half hour for lunch now in most places, but even a part of that could be used, you know, for a time of relaxation. Spend time with the Lord even then. And then certainly at the close of the day, who would think of closing a day without having a wonderful little talk with the one who loved us and gave himself for us? This is a little touch in this text this morning, when it says he makes me lie down.

In the Hebrew language it really means he lays me down. And every time I see a mother lying, putting a child down, especially to take a rest, I'm reminded of this text. He lays me down in these green pastures.

And then he leads me beside this steel wall. Now notice, it doesn't simply say that these are quiet waters or stagnant waters, but they're the kind of waters whose music, whose ripple is music to your soul. This is what it should do to us.

This is the outflowing of the Holy Spirit, who is so frequently presented to us in the scriptures under the figure of water. And here we have him in this wonderful figure of speech. The waters of quietness.

The music of it does something to you. It's not only the atmosphere into which you are brought, but the very music of the Word of God does something. This is altogether apart from the technical things that we have when we go into detailed study of the Word of God, as we may a little later this morning.

But just to catch the music of it, oh, sometimes I pity people who cannot appreciate the music of the scriptures. We had a dear sister down in New Zealand where we lived for some three years, who just

simply didn't care for music at all. The only meeting that she attended in the assembly was, Lord save, the breaking of bread.

And she always came in just before she felt that we were going to have the breaking of bread. But she didn't even like the singing of hymns. She had a husband who was passionately fond of music.

Can you imagine a combination like that? You get two people like packed together in the same house. But the poor dear brother, he took it all very nicely. He had a record player, and he had two favorite records of his.

Every once in a while when she was off guard, he'd go into the bedroom, lock the door, get the record player under the quilt, and play them, just so that he could enjoy the music of it. Well, one day the Lord took Brother Morrow home to himself. And of course there was no further need for the record player, because Mrs. Morrow just didn't like music.

We came to say goodbye to her as we were leaving there in 1938. I said to my wife, we've just got to go and see Mrs. Morrow to say goodbye. Mrs. Morrow at that time was well advanced in years.

So I realized that this was probably the last time we'd ever see her. So I made that remark. I said, well, Mrs. Morrow, this is probably the last time we'll see each other here on earth.

Yes, she said, this is probably it. But she said, you know, old ladies don't change much. Much as they tell me I'm just as beautiful as I was when I was 18.

You know, she likes to really believe that. I said, oh, one of these days, Mrs. Morrow, you're going to change. Oh, she said, you think so? Oh yes, I know it, Mrs. Morrow.

In what way do you think I will change? Well, I said, Mrs. Morrow, the next time I see you, you'll be up in glory strumming a harp and praising the Lord. And she couldn't believe it. She couldn't believe it.

This is what it'll be. But if you don't have any music in your soul now, well, all I can say is I pity you because this is part of it. And this is what these waters of quietness are for.

It's the music of them as they ripple along. They're producing you and me a responsive peace and satisfaction. And I take it that the next word that we have in this psalm is really the result.

You notice it says here, he restored my soul. I'm going to supply a word here which is not in the original, but I'm going to just supply it for the sake of showing you what I believe to be the continuity here. He maketh me to lie down and dream faster.

He leadeth me beside the waters of quietness. Thus, he restores my soul. He restores my soul.

You know, these are days when the emphasis is on soul. When I was a boy, I'd gone to school first. I was presented with a dictionary.

And I don't remember ever looking up any such words as psychology and psychiatry and so on. But going back to one of those old dictionaries, I found there were very few words that began with that syllable, psych, in those days. But you take a dictionary now, and you look under this letter P, and you'll see ever so many columns of words beginning with the psych, psychiatry, psychosomatic, and psychology and so on.

You know, every one of these words has to do with the study of the soul. So, this is an integral part of each one of us. We are tripartite beings.

We're made up of spirit, soul, and body. The spirit at the top, just as Paul puts it in 1 Thessalonians 5, that's the order. We reverse the order very much and put the body first, and then the soul, and finally the spirit.

But the spirit of God puts the spirit first, because it's by the spirit that we have God consciousness. This is the highest part of our being. It is by the spirit that we know, the seat of our intelligence, of knowledge.

But our souls are also important, because that's the seat of emotion. This is where we feel. This is where we long.

This is where we hope. This is where we sorrow. This is where we rejoice.

It's in the soul. And this is the part of us that needs repair, and needs restoration so often. And it so happens that we have a passage in the New Testament which goes into this subject in great detail.

So, I'm going to ask you please to turn to James chapter 5. The fifth chapter, the epistle of James, and beginning at verse 13. James 5 and 13, and I might say at this point that these morning talks are going to be something other than a sermon. They're going to be something in the nature of Bible studies.

So if you brought your little notebook along, you might want to make some notes of what we're going to say here just now. But looking here at James 5.13, you notice it says, Is any among you afflicted? Now what did you think about when he said afflicted? Did you think of a case of tuberculosis or cancer? If so, would you please turn back to verse 10 of the chapter? Take my brethren the prophet who spoke unto you in the name of the Lord, an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Do you think the prophet was suffering with some disease of the body? If you think so, let me turn you back for a few pages in your Bible to the 11th chapter of Hebrews.

Just a few pages ahead. Beginning at verse 32. Hebrews 11 verse 32.

And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah, of David, also of Samuel, and of the prophets. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword. Out of weakness were made strong, valiant in fight, turned to fight the army to the aliens.

Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourging. Yea, moreover, of bombs and imprisonment.

They were stoned, they were sown with thunder, they were tempted, they were slain with a sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. This is death. Is any among you afflicted? Let me just put this personal question to you, my beloved brother, sister in Christ.

Have you ever suffered anything like this? For Christ's sake. How many of us know anything about that kind of affliction? Oh, we know all about the pains it makes to the body. But how much do we know of this kind of affliction? For Christ's sake.

Well now, what is the remedy that James suggests? Let's come back to James 5. What does he suggest? What does he give us by the Holy Spirit? He says, is any among you afflicted? Just let him pray. Does it make any promises? Is it simply suggesting that he's prescribing a remedy? There it is. This is one way in which he restores my soul through prayer.

Beloved, this is more than saying prayers. To really pray, I recently put into my hands a book published by the brother Harold Shaw on how to talk with God. It's one of the most down-to-the-earth books on prayer that I have read.

And here he makes it very plain that prayer is something more than just repeating a lot of clichés. But it's really having an intercourse with God himself. And how relieving that is, isn't it? Even though you go away without the answer, perhaps to some of the things that you have asked for, it's a wonderful experience of having talked with God.

We've had people like this come into the council room, and I've been unable to help them at all because they have problems that go far beyond any of my power to even to suggest. And yet I've had a man shake my hand and say, well, I know you haven't given me the solution to my problem, but it was great to talk with you. You know, but if it's great to talk with a fellow human being, a fellow Christian, how much more wonderful to talk with God.

Doesn't it occur to you what a wonderful privilege this is? Let him pray. No promises, no details given, just let him pray. This is an outlet as well as an inlet.

Then there's a second case in that same verse there in James 5. It says, is any merry? And you might think that's hardly a case of need, but it is, isn't it? You know, some people think there's only one way to give expression to your merriment, and that is to use some worldly song or something. But what does the apostle give us here? He just let him sing psalms. And the apostle Paul goes into greater detail in this matter in the fifth chapter of Ephesians when he says, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Have you ever thought of what a wonderful thing it is that God has given to us in these choice hymns that we have in our hymn books? How poor we would be without them. Last night as we were listening to that wonderful rendition again of that time-honored hymn, When I surveyed the wondrous cross. You know, Julian, in his history, in his hymnology, tells us that that hymn is one of four hymns that stand out at the top of the list of all hymns sung by the church.

Wonderful. To give expression to this, is any among you married? Yes, God has an outlet for that. And this is a way of restoring your soul.

Is any among you married? Let them sing. Let them sing psalms. You don't have to copy the world.

After all, the music of this world isn't very much, is it? You ever notice how much repetition there is? A monotonous repetition, and then not only monotonous repetition, but ending as an unresolved chord, until you wonder how the thing's going to finish, you know? And it never does. And they tell me that they do that thing intentionally. They don't want you to be satisfied.

They want you to, as it were, just be on that edge of dissatisfaction, unsatisfaction all the time. Thank God we have that in the Word of God which does satisfy. Is any among you married? Let them sing.

Let them sing psalms. Then we come to a third case of need here, soul need. Verse 14.

Is any sick among you? Now here, the word for sick could have been used for weakness of any kind. In the original language, this is a word which has many meanings. And the translator here chose the meaning sick, but we could have chosen the word weakness just as well.

Is any among you weak? And I take it that this is something more than physical weakness. How do I come to that conclusion? Because of the people who have called him to meet the need. You know, if this was some physical trouble, you might have expected the apostles to get that they call in a specialist, you know, who knows how to handle this particular disease of yours.

But instead of that, he says, let him call for the elders of the church. Now the elders of the church, as we learn in the 20th chapter of the book of Acts, they were there to minister to the spiritual need. They had the oversight of God's people.

And I take it that this sickness or weakness of this dear brother, that is mentioned in this 14th verse, is a spiritual need. And it says, and let them pray over him. And of course the phrase, and anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, has led some people to say, well there must be something mysterious about this.

Well, suppose I suggest to you that this anointing with oil was a symbol that had some spiritual meaning. Such as we have in the 6th chapter of Galatians, for example. If any of you be overtaken in a purr, be that a spiritual restore touching one in the spirit of meekness, lest you also be tempted.

This is a great ministry. And in restoring our souls according to the language of our psalm this morning, God may use the elders in an assembly for this very purpose. Oh, how often even though a person is suffering with some physical trouble, he has troubles which are much deeper than that.

They need the spiritual remedy. That a man, an elder who is in touch with God, or elders who are in touch with God can meet that need. And you notice it says, let them pray over him.

Anointing with oil in the name of the Lord. Yes, I take it that I'm justified in using this as a symbol as well as a literal thing here this morning. That these men are able to minister spiritual things that revive the soul of this weak brother.

And what sympathy we should have for him. How very frequently when a man, because of his weakness, falls into something which is disgraceful, and which breeds the Holy Spirit of God, instead of going to him to win him back, you give him another kick down, further down. Oh beloved, may God raise up among us men who are able, because of their spiritual contact with God himself, to minister spiritual blessings to those who are weak in the faith.

Then in the next verse we come to another case of need. And the prayer of faith. This is not a continuation exactly of what you have in verse 14.

This is another distinct case. And I say that because the word for sick, and you'll pardon an old school teacher for calling your attention to these differences, the word for sick here is a word which means tired out. Different from the word in verse 14.

Tired out. Weak. Worn out.

And who doesn't get this way? I'm sure as I talk to you beloved, even though you're here at a conference and you had a wonderful day yesterday, we all did, and we should be spiritually refreshed this morning, but this is unusual isn't it? Next Monday morning will be different. For most of us. Then what? When you come down, when you come home all sagged up, or the one who stays at home with the children, and has all the responsibility of their care and maintenance all through the day, not only see that they're physically cared for, but spiritually protected.

And how necessary in these days when a flip of a button will expose a child to something which might be as ruinous to his life as anything could be. To maintain a vigilance over all these things, this is a real job. I have a daughter living up in Minnesota, and hope to see her in a few days.

Five children. Time was when she said she wanted seven. And I thought she was well on the way with five.

I find now she's pulled a moratorium on that. But I reminded her that her grandparents had ten, and they managed, and they knew how to minister to those who perhaps didn't exactly know which way to turn themselves. But all of this has a wearying effect.

I wonder sometimes how my dear mother got along with it, you know, with ten children. And we weren't always the best behaved kids in the neighborhood. I know when I went to call on a poor friend of mine, I heard loud noises inside, and I thought I'd better not go in there right now, so I just stayed at the door, listening.

His mother said, Why do you always have to go with the worst boy in the neighborhood? And when I came home, mother says, And where have you been? Oh, I was with Joe Napper. The worst boy in the neighborhood. When you get the two worst together, you've got the combination.

Can you imagine the wearying effect? Now this is only a little illustration. Oh, there are many other things. When I think of some of the parents today, young people come home and they've had their first fix of dope.

What a distressing thing. They're looking to their dilated pupils, and you know they've had a fix. Or you can smell the marijuana on them.

Oh, what a waste upon a mother's heart. What an awful weight upon a father's heart. To think that the child which they have brought into the world is going this way.

These are things that wherewithal. And that's the kind of people James is talking about here when he says, The prayer of faith shall save the tired out, and the Lord shall raise him up or rally him. That's right, isn't it? The Lord shall raise him up.

I like that. You know, there's the only place some parents can find any comfort these days. And this awful part of restoring my soul.

And then you notice there's another complication comes in at the end of that 15th verse. It doesn't say when he has sinned. But if he has committed any sin, that would complicate the thing.

And sometimes this does complicate our soul trouble. Is that we ourselves have done things which are grieving to the Holy Spirit. If he has committed any sin, that's another case.

Thank God, they shall be forgiven him. And of course we learn the process, see we're not from John's epistle. That if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just.

To forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Then we come to another case in verse 16. For there are faults between brethren.

And what's the rule here? The rule here is to confess your faults. One to another and pray for one another. And this is the first time that the word healed is used in the passage.

And you can see that it's in connection with something that is quite spiritual. So that the healing here is not necessarily a bodily healing at all. It's a healing of a spiritual nature.

A healing of fellowship between two whose fellowship has been disrupted because of some fault. Yes, they had the grace to go to each other. One went to another.

And how wonderful it is. You know, one of the finest recommendations I ever heard a wife give to her husband. She says, you know, he has his differences with his wife.

But, he always knows how to apologize. You know, that's part of confessing your faults, isn't it? To apologize. You say, you mean I have to apologize to my wife? You mean I have to apologize to my husband? You might even have to apologize to your children.

I thank God I had parents that did that. My father was a strict disciplinarian. There were times when he'd get us off to one side and say, son, I was all stirred up by what you did and what you said.

And I probably went too far. Put it down the wrong way and that kicked me out of it. Friends, this is a wonderful thing, isn't it? How James deals with this various problem.

And then there's one problem left, right down in the end of the chapter, verse 19. If any of you do err from the truth, now that's serious. That's really serious.

If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him. Not simply go out and tell other people what dangerous doctrine he quoted, but one convert him. Let him know that he which converted the sinner from the error of his ways, shall save the soul from death and hide a multitude of sins.

Now this is a rather detailed process of the restoration of the soul. And you'll notice coming back to our psalm for just a moment or two now, I'm concluding what it leads up to. You are noticing that, in verse psalm 23.

He restores my soul, and what's the next thing he does? What does he do? He leads me in the path of righteousness through his namesake. You see how practical this is? And the order of the things in psalm 23 is so natural, isn't it? First of all, we find know him as our shepherd, the one who meets our every need, enabling us to say I shall not go on. Putting me in a place of rest, making me lie down in the green pastures.

Refreshing my soul with the waters of quietness, restoring my soul. And leading me in the path of righteousness through his namesake. The word translated path is really tracks or footprints.

And it suggests to me, dear friends, that when the Lord leads you and me, he leads us in ways that he himself has gone before. Tracks of righteousness. And this applies to every activity of our daily life.

That's why the word put in the plural. Path of righteousness. Your social life, your business life, your home life, your classroom life, whatever it is, should be a path of righteousness.

A kind of thing of honor and glory to God. And all this is possible because of what goes before in the 23rd Psalm. In keeping with that, let's turn to hymn number 100, or 206 rather.

Number 206 in your hymn. When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way. While we do his goodwill, he abides with us still.

And with all who will trust and obey. Number 206, and let us rise to sing. Amen.

And now, may the God of the dead, and the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good thing, in every good work, to do his will. Commending us to tribally fear our Father, that he is worthy and exalted. He is the God which hath all understanding, and a character in our hearts and in our faith.

Now Lord Jesus Christ, in his dear name we pray.

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