

Psalm 23 Series (Session 1)

by Joseph Carroll

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in experiencing God's blessings and provision, using the 23rd Psalm as a model for living a life of faith.

Duration: 42:27

Scripture: Psalm 23:1, Psalm 127:1, Isaiah 26:3, Matthew 6:33, John 15:5, Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 13:2, Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 11:6, 1 John 4:8

Topics: "Christian Life", "Dependence On God", "Faith"

Description

Joseph Carroll emphasizes the transformative power of truly believing in the Word of God, asserting that faith must be active and personal to be meaningful. He challenges the congregation to reflect on their understanding of love, faith, and dependence on God, illustrating that without these, they are spiritually empty. Carroll uses Psalm 23 to highlight the necessity of recognizing our need for God as our shepherd, and the importance of resting in His provision and guidance. He stresses that faith is the key to experiencing God's grace and fulfilling His purpose in our lives. Ultimately, he calls for a commitment to live by faith, trusting in God's ability to lead and provide.

Transcript

The Word of God has some very shattering things to say to us about ourselves. We say that we are Bible-believing Christians. We use the word inerrant.

We believe the Word of God is inerrant. And it is the Word of God to my heart. But it is well being said, truth does not become mine until it becomes me.

Truth does not become mine until it becomes me. Then it becomes mine. It's in a book, but it's not in me.

One of the reasons for this is, do we really believe it? Very few people do. Very few. For example, the Word of God says that without love, we are nothing.

How do we believe that? Do you really believe it? That without love, you are a zero. So am I. Well, not quite a zero. Yes, zero plus zero is zero.

Now, do you believe that? If we really believed it, we would concentrate on knowing what the Word of God says about love, and above all else, we would be characterized by love. And we are not. So we obviously don't really believe it.

Otherwise, we do something about it. If you consulted a doctor, you were not feeling at all well, and he said you have a small cancer, just very small. Well, you don't have to believe it.

You don't have to believe it. You can go home and say, well, perhaps he's right, maybe he's wrong. You are going to take action because what he has told you demands action.

That's the point. And if you don't deal with it, it's going to destroy you. Why don't we believe the same things about the spiritual realm? All right? Without love, I'm nothing.

Speak with the tongues of men and of angels, give my body to be burned, give all that I have and so on, and I'm still nothing. Do you really believe that? If you believed it, you would do something about it. That's the point.

All right, let's think of another one. Our Lord said, without me, you can do nothing. Do I believe that? Do you really believe that? That spiritually, without my Lord, I can achieve, without him I can achieve zero.

But that's what the Word of God says. That's what he says. Well, if this is true, and it is true, I'm going to concentrate on what? A life of abiding in him.

I'm going to concentrate on it. I'm going to master it. Because if I do not master it, I'm achieving nothing spiritually.

Now, this is the Word of God. And it's not exaggerating to approximate. I'm not doing that at all.

It's truth. Because he is my life. All right, let's think of another one.

Perhaps that's enough for one day. But let's think of another one now. All right? Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.

Now, what does that tell us? Well, only the Lord can build a house. Do you believe that? So you can build a large house, you can put a cross on it, pews in it, an organ in it, a lot of people in it, and it's nothing. You labor in vain.

Because the Lord has not done it. And it's in vain. And that's what we're confronted with in the church visible, primarily.

That which is of man, but it's not of God. And the sad thing is, the majority of people know it. And yet they keep on contributing, they keep on attending, and yet it's empty.

God isn't in it. Glory of the Lord has departed. So except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.

Do you really believe that? When we commenced the work here some years ago, I wrote the Constitution. And in the Constitution, I put, We will not make appeals, we will not take collections, we will not incur debt. Hmm.

Well, it took a little time to convince some people about that. Three things. We do not take collections, we do not incur debt, we do not make needs known.

The only collection we take here is once a month for missions, not for the work. Why? Well, for two reasons. If we say we trust the Lord, we must prove it.

And this was an opportunity to prove that we walk by faith. The second thing is, he would have to do it. He would have to do it.

If anything were to be built here, he would have to build it. And he has built it. He has built it.

Obviously, he has built it. Man certainly has not done it. Because he had to provide.

He had to provide. So do we believe that? If we believe this truth, we must prove it by our actions. Now, the last one, and the one we are going to think about more especially during these mornings together, is Hebrews 11, 6. Without faith, it is impossible to please him.

That's quite a statement. Without faith, it is impossible to please him. Doesn't matter what you are doing, how intense, how earnest, how motivated.

Without faith, you cannot please him. Period. Therefore, we are going to consider some of the truths that arise out of the 23rd Psalm.

Why the 23rd Psalm? Because it is the most familiar of psalms? No. Because though it is the most familiar of psalms, it is the least understood. It is the least understood.

But it is an important psalm to us because it is a psalm of faith. And it's a psalm of the present tense. Psalm of the present tense.

And the key to it, of course, is faith. It's faith. Many years ago, I was visiting the city of Asheville, North Carolina, and I was scheduled to speak here in the city of Greenville.

And some friends in Asheville, or rather, I was in Greenville, in Asheville, and some friends in Greenville had come up to take me down to Greenville and then return me to Asheville. And they did so. It was in midwinter, very cold.

And when they arrived in Asheville, it was about nine o'clock in the evening, and they pulled up outside the home where I was staying, and I didn't have any top coat, and they said, Mr. Carroll, it's very cold. We'll wait until you are in the house before we leave. Something might happen so that you're not able to enter, and it is dangerously cold.

So I said, no, it's all right. My friend is there. The lights are on.

You can make your way back to Greenville. Well, I went to the door with great confidence, knocked on the door. No answer.

Kept on knocking. No answer. Kept on knocking.

No answer. Then I began to feel that biting cold on my ears, so I decided to see if I could get in the house, and I began to try the windows. Went around the house.

Rather large house. Tried all the windows. No, all locked.

And I looked inside, very cozy, very warm, and I was outside. So I kept circling and knocked again and tried again, and after about 10 or 15 minutes, I realized I would have to do something about it. I didn't want to knock at the door of a neighbor at that hour of the night, so I decided to make my way to a little shopping center about half a mile away.

I had to walk on a main highway to arrive at the destination, and I was walking facing the traffic, and I remember quite clearly a car coming around a curve and blinding me with its lights, and I slipped into a ditch which had about a foot of icy water in it. So I crawled out, rejoicing, just, just, and made my way to the shopping center and telephoned where I thought my friend would be, and she was there. So I explained my predicament to her in a rather complaining way, I'm sure, and she said, but Mr. Carroll, I did give you a key.

Her. So I put my hand in my pocket and there was the key. Now we smile, but how sad.

I had the key all the time. I was cold, I was miserable, I was disturbed, and all the time I had the answer. Faith is the key, and there is no other key.

To all that God has for you, that's the key. Faith. And so very often we're cold, we're miserable, we're disconcerted, we're upset, we're disturbed, we're anxious.

Why? Because we've forgotten the key. It's there. It's there to be used.

And all that our Heavenly Father provides for us is this superabundance. It's all there, and we're looking at it, but we don't experience it. We say, well, it's there, it's in the Word of God, this is tremendous, but it's not mine.

It never will be until you exercise faith. For example, when you were saved, what happened? Was it because you wept tears of remorse? No. Was it because you repented? No.

If you didn't repent, you didn't believe. But repentance does not save you. When you believe, when you exercise faith, that's when God met you.

This is God's method. You're going to have to find out His method, not man's. His faith, His method is faith, you see.

When you believed, you were saved. But not till then. So let's consider a very important principle here.

God's grace responds to my faith and meets me in the area of my need. That's basic to everything. I need the grace of God every moment of every day.

We all do. God's grace responds to my faith and meets me in the area of my need. We might liken grace to a very attractive young lady being pursued by a not equally attractive young man.

And grace is there in the home and the young man of effort knocks at the door. Great effort. Grace doesn't answer.

All right? Intensity of purpose knocks. Grace doesn't answer. And of course you can go down the list.

But then faith knocks and grace opens the door. Very simple truths, but fundamental to everything. And without it, you are not pleasing God.

Isn't that sad? You can have a perfect motive. Moses had a perfect motive. To the point of slaying an Egyptian.

Perfect motive. He wanted the deliverance of his people. But he wasn't doing what God told him to do and trusting God to enable him to do it.

And we all know what happened. He had a perfect motive. Willing to sacrifice anything.

But he did not exercise faith. So he didn't please God at all. Without faith, it is impossible to please him.

Let's look at this 23rd Psalm. Remembering, it is the psalm of faith. The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. Now the only person who needs a shepherd is a sheep. It's the only person.

A sheep. Well, what is a sheep? Well, a sheep is the dumbest of all animals. Just the dumbest of all animals.

Helpless, foolish, if you like, stupid. We say, that's stupid sheep. And they are.

In my country of Australia, we have more sheep than the rest of the world put together. We have millions of them. Very often preaching out in country towns, the farmers would take us out.

And we would ride a horse to look at his sheep. His merino sheep. Foolish animal.

Needy. The neediest animal on the face of the earth is a sheep. The most helpless, really.

So the sheep needs a shepherd because the sheep is a sheep. Now until you realize you are as hopeless and more hopeless than a sheep, you are never going to know the Lord as your shepherd. Never.

Never. Only the sheep qualifies for a shepherd. That's a hard one for some people to get hold of.

Not until you realize your utter helplessness. Now why is it that people don't realize this? Because they do not realize they are dealing with God. When you are dealing with God, you are dealing with one who is wholly other.

His ways are not our ways. They are not only unlike our ways, they are totally different to our ways. Totally different.

Wholly other than the ways of man. So what does man do? Well, man cultivates man. If you have the education, if you have the experience, you have the gifts, you can do the job.

That's nonsense. Only God can do it. Only God can do it.

One of the greatest problems with a preacher who has had a lot of experience is he might begin to think that he can preach. Once he thinks that, he is in trouble. I have been a Christian nearly 42 years.

Preaching for 30 odd. Can I preach? I have a gift. But you need more than a gift.

The Spirit of God must quicken the word that is spoken. Unless he does that, it is worthless. It will fall to the ground.

Do we really believe that? Do we really believe that we are helpless? And hopeless. Apart from Jesus Christ. Not only that, we are very dangerous.

So David made a great discovery. The great discovery he made was not that the Lord was a shepherd, but that David was a sheep. That's the great discovery.

I once spoke in a church here in the South and I gave a series of messages on the 23rd Psalm about half way through the series, morning series. I went to lunch with the pastor and his wife and they had been missionaries for many years. Now we are in their late fifties.

And we sat down together and I said to the pastor, well, doctor, what are you going to order? He says, well, I don't know, Charles. I said, well, what about you, Mrs. So-and-so? She said, oh, how could I possibly order anything? I'm only a sheep. I thought, well, one person is at least reactive.

I'm only a sheep. How would I know what I want for lunch? I've been a missionary for about 30 years. I wonder what kind of missionary.

David made the great discovery that he was a sheep. So a sheep needs a shepherd. He was conscious of his need.

And then he made his second discovery that the Lord would be his shepherd. So he responds to reveal truth. He responds to it.

How does he respond? He responds by an act of faith. He says, the Lord is, present tense, my shepherd. He is my shepherd.

Therefore, I shall not want. So we have, firstly, an act of faith. An act of faith.

Let's think of faith for a moment. There is a seeking faith, a receiving faith, and a resting faith. For example, before you were saved, you became conscious of your sin, conscious that you were separated from God, conscious that you were under condemnation.

And so you began to seek for God's answer to your need. You began to seek. The very fact that you were seeking is an evidence of faith because you believe there must be an answer.

So it's a seeking faith. Then you heard the gospel. Christ died for our sins according to the scripture, rose again the third day, and so on.

And you exercised a receiving faith. You received Christ as Saviour and Lord. Now today, if I ask you, do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Yes.

Did you receive him today? No. But you believe on him? Yes. It's a resting faith.

It's a resting faith now. So you have a seeking faith, then there is revealed truth, God's answer to your need. You appropriate that by faith, a receiving faith, then you rest.

Are you believing on the Lord Jesus Christ this morning? Yes. But you are resting. The same is true when the Lord Jesus Christ reveals himself to you in any way as the one who wants to meet a need in your life or do a certain thing.

You appropriate him for that need, then you rest. So you have a seeking faith, a receiving faith, and a resting faith. Now, in the psalm, you also have the act of faith, the attitude of faith, and the attainment of faith.

First of all, an act of faith, followed by an attitude of faith, and then the attainment of faith. And the psalmist brings this out very clearly in a brief pregnant statement of the act, the attitude, and the attainment, Psalm

37.5. Commit thy way unto the Lord. That's an act of faith.

Trust also in him. That's an attitude of faith. And he shall bring it to pass.

If there's one verse I want you to take home with you, it's that verse. Commit thy way. That's an act of faith.

You must commit yourself. Trust also in him. That's an attitude of faith.

A maintained attitude. And as that attitude of faith is maintained, what is taking place? He shall bring it to pass. He will do it.

He will do it. As that attitude of faith is maintained. So, David here commits himself in this great act of faith.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. Now, that's a tremendous statement.

That's a tremendous statement. I shall not want. Now, in this materialistic age, what are we thinking of immediately? Oh, he's going to provide for him financially.

That's at the bottom of the list. You read through the New Testament and see just how much attention is given to money. How much the Word of God teaches about money in the New Testament.

You read through the epistles or the Acts of the Apostles, if you will. You're going to be surprised. And if we pay any attention to the law of Scripture proportion, we're not going to give a great deal of attention to money.

Just read through the New Testament and see what it says about money. That's at the bottom of the list. You have greater needs than money.

You have spiritual needs. You have emotional needs. You have deep, deep needs of the higher.

Money is at the bottom. It says, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

Period. That's faith. That's an act of faith.

Now, let me ask you. Is the Lord your shepherd? Say, oh yes, he is my shepherd. We'll prove it.

If he's your shepherd as you sit here this morning, you're satisfied. You are not wanting. If he's truly your shepherd.

And if you're living by faith, then there's no other way to live. There's no other way for this book to live than the life of faith. It's the only life this book speaks about.

So you sit here this morning. I don't want anything. Can you say that? I don't have any wants.

Needs, yeah. Wants, no. The Lord is my satisfaction.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? There is none on earth that I desire beside thee. Can you say that? Can you really say that? Now, there's a difference between inheritance and possession. I know we're being a bit technical here, but we have to be technical.

Inheritance is all that is true for me in Christ. He doesn't have favorites. Not at all.

Not really. Inheritance is all that is true for me in Christ. Possession is just that much of my inheritance that I make my own by faith.

He wants to be my shepherd, obviously. When does he become my shepherd? When I receive him. There is the seeking faith.

What is the answer to my need? What is the answer to life? How can I walk victoriously? Jesus Christ is the answer. All right, I will appropriate him as my shepherd. I will receive him.

Now I will rest. So David commits himself by an act of faith to the Lord as his shepherd. And then he says, because he is my shepherd, I shall never want for anything.

Why? Because of this wonderful person, this shepherd who's going to provide for me and he's going to protect me. And that's what the shepherd does. He provides for and he protects the sheep.

When did you make him your shepherd? I will remember the time when this truth became real to me, the Spirit of God illuminated to me. Truth does not become mine until it becomes me. It's one thing to see the truth, another thing to experience it.

So there must be a commitment. It's many, many years ago now, but I committed myself to the Lord as my shepherd. I could keep you here for the rest of this week telling you of his faithfulness as a shepherd.

The rest of this week, that's not an exaggeration. And no once, praise God, the act of faith is followed by what? The attitude of faith. Now what is the attitude of faith? He maketh me to lie down.

Why? David commits himself to the Lord as his shepherd, an act of submission to him and faith in him. And what does the Lord do? He says, well, you just lie down. You're not going anywhere.

Just lie down. But Lord, no, just lie down. And he puts that pressure and the sheep lies down.

What am I doing? Well, you're doing my will. Oh. Thought I had to be busy.

Just lie down. Just lie down. He maketh me.

He forces me to be still. The attitude of faith is what? Rest. That's the attitude.

He makes you lie down. He puts you in a position of rest. Oh, but Lord, my child.

Well, just lie down. But what are you going to do about my child? Well, just lie down. I'll speak to you about your child when you can hear what I'm going to say.

But not till then. The world, the church. All right, just lie down.

I'll speak to you about the world and I'll speak to you about the church and I'll speak to you about anything you need to know when you can hear what I'm saying. When the Lord called Moses up into a mount on one occasion, he let him sit there for six days. He just sat on the mountaintop.

There he was, sitting there. Why? The Lord spoke to him on the seventh day. It took six days to quieten that great servant of the Lord and bring him to that place where he could hear the voice of God.

Six days, just sitting there. Doing nothing? Of course not. He's doing the will of God so that on the seventh day he can hear the voice of God and know what God's saying to him and remember it and act upon it.

But this is the age of satanic activity, restlessness. It's a restless age. People must be doing something, going somewhere.

Restless, that's satanic. Satan is a restless spirit. He's depicted as walking up and down on the earth.

He's walking, he's restless. The more he takes over this poor world, the more restless it's going to become. Restless.

And the more wicked. So the act of faith is followed by the attitude of faith. The attitude of rest.

The evidence of trust is rest. If you are trusting, you are resting. That's the test.

The evidence of trust is rest. Recall some years ago I was preaching at Moody Memorial Church. It was a Mid-America Keswick and it was the first time they had invited me to the conference.

I flew across from Japan for this conference. And there were some big names there and the evening I had to preach on the fullness of the spirit which was a very important evening. It was Dr. Culbertson, he was president of Moody and Dr. Fleece, he was president of CBC and Redpath, he was the pastor of the church and three or four other big names.

And I had about 30 seconds to go before I stood up to preach. So the Lord said, are you trusting? I said, well of course Lord. You are not resting.

And I wasn't. So I felt my shoulders drop about two inches. And then that night the Lord undertook for me in a wonderful way.

But you see, he checked me first. Are you really trusting me? Yes. Well, why are you so tense? Hmm.

I wasn't trusting. I was tense. So I relaxed.

And then he led me. He gave me what he wanted me to say. The evidence of trust is rest.

He's going to make you lie down. And from that point he will lead you. But not till then.

He maketh me to lie down what follows, he leadeth me. He leadeth me. So the man God leads is the man who has committed himself to God totally without reserve and who is restfully trusting him.

That man God leads. And I want to say this, no other man. No other man.

God's not going to speak to a man who won't listen. And what's more, a man who won't trust him to do what God is telling him he's going to do. Is he going to speak to that man? Of course not.

The impression must be made by the Spirit of God. And it can only be made when we're still and we're quiet before the Lord. One occasion I was flying across the English Channel.

It was late in the afternoon, towards sunset. And for once the channel was like a mill pond. And I can still recall looking down on that channel and seeing a white ribbon on the face of the water.

And then I came to a ship crossing the channel. And as I watched that ship, that seemingly tiny ship down there, crossing the channel in the white wake, propeller wake, for a long distance behind it, I thought, well it's just like the heart of man. When the heart is still, God can leave his impression.

But when it's turbulent, as the channel so often is turbulent and stormy, you could not see any wake of the propeller. It's lost in the storm. It's lost in the turbulent water.

But when the water was still, there's the impression. The impression is being made. The word of God says, be still, be still and know that I am God.

Be still. If I'm trusting, I am resting. And from that point, he leads me.

From that point. And he leads me restfully. Restfully.

Some of us present, I'm sure, some of us who are a little older, had the privilege of meeting or knowing the late Dr. McQuilkin, who was the first president of Columbia Bible College. He was a very gracious man, very sunny Christian. And he had a delightful sense of humour.

And on one occasion, following a meeting at a Ben Lippin conference, a lady came to him and she said, Dr. McQuilkin, when I'm here on the mountaintop, I really know what it is to walk in victory. She said, but when I go down and I go to my office, I maintain my victory for about three days, then I lose it. And she said, it's that woman I have to work with.

She upsets me. She upsets everybody. And so he smiled and listened.

He said, she doesn't upset you. Dr. McQuilkin, she upsets everybody. And I have to work with her, I have to sit next to her every day, all day.

She upsets me terribly and I lose my victory. What can I do about it? He said, she doesn't upset you. You upset yourself.

You don't have to be upset. And I'll tell you the reason why. He said, you have the butt in the wrong place.

Then he spoke to her about the 23rd Psalm. The Lord is my shepherd, but this woman upsets me. He said, no, you put the butt in the right place.

This woman upsets me, but the Lord is my shepherd. He keeps me in peace. Do you see that? It depends who you finish with.

The problem of the Lord. Depends what you occupy it with. The butt can be in the wrong place.

The Lord is my shepherd, but I have this financial problem. I have this financial problem, but the Lord is my shepherd. He's going to meet her.

There was a very knowledgeable missionary in Japan. He was German, and he'd been through much suffering. He knew the ways of the Lord.

He went to a little town, well it was not so little, the town of Niigata, the city of Niigata. And the missionary that he was replacing, who'd left the fellow, was a very young man, and he was just learning the ways of the Japanese. But this German missionary, he knew the Japanese.

The Japanese are more conscious of problems than any other people in all the world. They're all problem conscious. They've always got problems, full of problems.

And so he, the first week he was there, one morning, knock at the door, and here's a dear Japanese lady. She says, Oh, I have a mundai, I have a problem. He smiled at her and said, Do you have a problem? He said, Yes, I have a problem.

He said, I don't believe in problems. You don't believe in problems? No. You don't have any problems? No.

Not one? Not one. Don't believe in them? Well, the word soon got round town. He didn't believe in problems.

He didn't have any problems. Then he spoke to her about the Lord as his shepherd. He just hands them over to the Lord.

He looks after her. There he was, smiling, having a good time. The Lord leads you restfully.

Restfully. There's a lady in Germany who once saw sheep, and there was this man driving them. He was behind and he was driving them, and they were running, and they were panting, and they were hot.

And she said, That's the first time I've ever seen a shepherd driving sheep. And the friend said, That's not a shepherd, my friend. That man's from the slaughterhouse.

He was driving them to the slaughterhouse. Now you can take your pick. You can be led by the shepherd or driven by the devil.

And it's your choice. All right, shall we pray?

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