

# Session 5: John 17

by Joseph Carroll

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*Joseph Carroll's sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's word, the power of prayer, and the necessity of seeking God's glory in all things.*

**Duration:** 41:49

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 18:1-19, Psalm 139:23-24, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 18:19, Mark 11:24, James 1:5

**Topics:** "Christian Life", "Faithfulness of God", "Seeking God's Glory"

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## Description

Joseph Carroll emphasizes the importance of receiving a direct word from God before taking action, using Elijah's obedience to God's command as a key example. He explains that God's promises often come with conditions and that true prayer requires symphonizing with the Holy Spirit and a prayer partner. Carroll highlights that seeking God's glory should be the ultimate motive in prayer, as demonstrated by Elijah's plea for the people to recognize the Lord. He warns against self-centeredness, which can lead to inconsistency and a lack of faith, as seen in Elijah's fear of Jezebel. The sermon concludes with a call to trust in God's promises and to wait for His guidance before acting.

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## Transcript

We turn together to the first chapter of Kings. The first chapter of Kings, first book of Kings, chapter 18. Chapter 18, verse 1. We had a series of studies on Elijah some months ago.

We did not complete the studies and it might well be that the Lord, knowing He wanted this message for this evening, did not permit us to do so. We will review some of the past study and then we will come to the vital message for this evening. Chapter 18, verse 1. And it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year saying, Go show thyself to Ahab and I will send rain upon the earth.

Now the significance of this word of the Lord to Abraham, to Elijah is twofold. Firstly, it is a command. And it is a command that will take courage to obey.

Go show thyself to Ahab. The second thing is a promise. And I will send rain upon the earth.

Now invariably where you have a promise of God, you have a precept or a condition. If you study very, very carefully the promises of God and the context of the promises, you will find a precept or you will find a condition that must be met if God is going to fulfill His promise. So that we find the command to Elijah, Go

show thyself unto Ahab.

And then the promise, I will send rain upon the earth. And verse 2, the immediate unquestioning obedience of Elijah. And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab.

It is very important that before we take any action, we have the word of the Lord as our warrant. It is not enough to do something which we think is a good thing. It is not enough to do something which we believe will glorify the Lord.

We must have the direct command, the direct word from the Spirit of God. And we must wait until we get it. We cannot take a promise and say this promise fits this situation, so I will claim it.

And I will trust the Lord to fulfill His word. The promise the Lord wants you to claim, He will give to you. The Lord is not going to permit you to determine your own guidance which He is obligated to bless.

Now let's underline that. He is not going to let you determine the promise that He is going to have to honor. He is not that foolish.

The only promise He will honor is the promise that He quickens to your spirit by His Spirit. I've mentioned before that I had a very wonderful prayer partner for about 18 months in a certain city. And whenever I was not itinerating, we would meet together to pray.

Sometimes three, four, five afternoons a week. No set period to pray. Perhaps an hour, perhaps two hours, perhaps longer we would pray together.

And he kept a diary and when we had to move to another city, he then told me one day that there was not one request in that 18 months that we had claimed together on the basis of Matthew 18 19, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven, that God had not answered. Not once. Not once.

We shouldn't be surprised at that. But there for 18 months, this long list of answers to prayer, and some of them were truly amazing answers to prayer. But how did we come to claim that promise, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, and so on? Well, we just didn't sit down and say, well Lord, here's a promise and here's a situation and we're agreeing that you will do it, therefore you must do it.

Not at all. The word agree in the original means to symphonize, to symphonize. Well how did we symphonize? My prayer partner would pray, he'd begin with worship of the Lord, and then he would pray perhaps say for three things, and then he would stop.

And I would pray, and perhaps I would pick up one of those things that he had prayed for, and I would also pray for it. He would pray again, and it could be that he would pick up the same thing in his intercession, and begin to get real grip with it. And then when I prayed again, I would pray for a number of things, but I would take the same thing again, and this time real grip.

That's symphonizing in the Spirit, symphonizing in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings it to him, he brings it to me, he brings it to him, he brings it to me. That's it.

You claim it, and God will answer it every time he answers it. And that's one of the tremendous values of a prayer partner that you're on the same spiritual wavelength with. You can symphonize.

And when you symphonize, there's not the slightest possibility of error. Not the slightest. We didn't make one mistake in 18 months, why? We symphonized, and you know it, because there you are, you're both on the same wavelength for the same thing.

That's symphonizing. God will always fulfill his promise, and he does. I'm sometimes a little suspicious of people who say to me, God gave me this verse.

He may have, he may not have. You must be very sure of that. But if you are sure that he has given you the verse, then keep on claiming it before his throne until he answers.

But it's a much safer, much better way to symphonize with somebody else in prayer. Don't try to symphonize. You won't.

You'll lose yourself in the Lord, and then you'll find the Holy Spirit emphasizing one thing again and again and again. That is what he wants. But the Lord will give you promises.

There is a little book, Wall of Fire by Marie Monson. That's a tremendous little book, in which she gives her experiences in China, and how the Lord kept her. But invariably, the Lord would give her a promise.

He would give her a promise. And she would lay hold upon that promise, and she would plead that promise before the Lord. And he answered.

But she'd keep on pleading it. Keep on pleading. She was afflicted with cancer.

Manifested itself in her leg. Diagnosis was certain, cancer. She said this with my wife and I when we spent a wonderful weekend in Norway with her.

The Lord gave her a promise. It's the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelling in you. He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal body by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.

So she claimed the quickening of her mortal body by the Spirit of God within her to rid her body of this cancer. And she was healed. She was 80-odd when we met her.

Very alert. Tremendous woman. See, the Lord gave her the promise.

And she laid hold upon it. And that little book is a tremendous book. Get it, read it, and read it to your children.

God will give you a promise. But make sure that He gives it to you. I recall many years ago, a dear friend of mine was in very, a very dangerous position.

And the Lord gave me a promise, Mark 11, 24. All things whatsoever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them. That's a great promise.

And He gave it to me and I knew it. I've been praying with her husband all that day. And about nine o'clock at night, and I'm sharing a few things with you tonight that I seldom share, because I believe they need to be shared.

I do not believe that any person should ever exalt himself knowingly. This is a serious matter for a preacher to do, but sometimes you have to share. And so I said to her husband, I believe I should pray through the night.

And I did. And all I did all night, was just claim the one promise. After all, that's all I needed.

So two verses all night, Mark 11, 24. Lord, I'm praying and I'm believing. And I quoted constantly the word of the psalmist, remember the word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

So two verses all night, Mark 11, 24. Lord, remember the word upon which thou hast caused thy servant to hope. And the next day, the doctor said, it's a miracle.

When you get a promise, don't you let go of that promise. And whatever the Lord tells you to do, do it. If he tells you to fast and pray, fast and pray.

If he tells you to pray throughout the night, pray throughout the night. Don't ask questions, don't try to reason it out, and say no to that sinful pleasure, loving self-life at every point. If you don't, you're not going to get your answer.

Lord, remember the word upon which thou hast caused me to hope. Never go back on your guidance. Never turn aside from your promise until God has answered.

Even though everything may seem to be falling apart, that doesn't matter. Hold on to that promise. And with the promise, you are holding on to the faithfulness of the Lord to fulfill his word.

And he will. You remember the word of Moses to the children of Israel when they were at the Red Sea? Hemmed in on every side. Enemy behind them, sea before them, hemmed in.

Everything seemed lost. What did he say? Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you this day. Why? Because God had told him they were going into that land on the other side of the Red Sea.

And Red Sea or no Red Sea, Egyptian or no Egyptian, they're going across that sea. How they're getting across is not Moses' business. His business is to believe what God told him he would do.

That's your business and that's my business. Not to be dictated to or dominated by circumstances, but to keep steadfastly looking to the Lord and trusting him for the impossible thing. So Elijah had a promise that he was to show himself unto Abraham, unto Ahab, and God would send rain on the earth.

Now, again in the 18th chapter, verse 37, he has come to the climactic moment. I want you to notice his plea to the Lord. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

Then the fire of the Lord fell. Now, what do you notice about this final plea to the Lord? The one thing that concerns him is the glory of the Lord. That's his ultimate plea.

Hear me, O Lord, hear me. Why? That this people may know that thou art the Lord God. We pray for Brother Cassidy this morning, tomorrow morning.

Why? Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people of Greenville may know that thou art the Lord God. That's why. That's the ultimate motive.

And that's the only, ultimately the only acceptable motive. Arthur Pink has this to say. It is only when we look beyond personal interest and plead for the glory of God that we reach the place where he will not

deny.

Now, that's an important word. We dealt with that a little last week. We're often disturbed, or some of us are, as to why God doesn't answer prayer.

This is one of the reasons why he doesn't answer. We never get beyond personal interest. But Pink is right when he says, when we do with all our heart get beyond the personal interest and seek only the glory of God, then he will answer.

He will answer. And here Elijah reaches the climactic moment. He says, hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

And God answered his prayer. Verse 39. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, the Lord, he is the God.

The Lord, he is the God. An immediate answer to his prayer. That's what he prayed for, and that's what God did.

But I want you to observe here that Elijah didn't stop there. Verse 40. And Elijah said unto them, take the prophets at bail, let not one of them escape.

And they took them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook and slew them there. And Elijah said unto Ahab, get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain. In passing I want you to notice that the people didn't come to Elijah and shake his hands and say, thank you, Elijah.

What a great man you are, Elijah. Look what you've done for us. Honor.

What was the second part in that petition? It's very important that you notice it. And that thou hast turned their heart back again. I want to tell you, my good friends, no man on God's earth can turn your heart to the Lord.

The Holy Spirit has to do that. They didn't say a word to Elijah. They'd forgotten all about Elijah.

That's true preaching. The Lord, he is the God. He has done it.

Hallelujah. And then he dealt with these false prophets. He didn't stop there.

He took a tremendous stand of faith because he was relying upon the faithfulness of God to fulfill his promise. And he made this statement to Ahab of all people. He says, get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain.

Well, there was no sound of any rain. No rain. The skies were clear.

There is the sound of abundance of rain. Why did he say that? Because God had promised him there would be abundance of rain. Now, there's a very important point to note here.

What is he going to do? God has given him a promise and God is faithful. God will fulfill his promise. So what does Elijah do? Does he turn to the Lord and does he say, now Lord, you told me you were going to send rain.

Send it. He didn't say that. Did he sit down and say, well, God will honor his word.

He's got to. So I'm just going to sit here and wait for the rain. I'm claiming the promise and God's going to do it.

No, he didn't do that. I wouldn't do that if I were you either. You know why God gives you a promise? Because you now pray.

Faith is absolutely vital to prevailing with God. It's underlined. But there is no such thing as believing God for something and getting it without praying for it.

Underline that too. Two times. He is a man of great faith, but he also has a great knowledge of the ways of the Lord.

God has given him a promise. He has fulfilled a condition. The people have repented.

They have turned aside from their evil ways. They've acknowledged God to be the Lord. All right, the rain should have fallen immediately, but it didn't.

What did he do? He prayed. And how did he pray? Verse 42. So Elijah had went up to eat and to drink, and Elijah went up to the top of Camel, and he cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees.

And he said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up and looked, and behold, there is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

He prayed with confident expectation. Underline that. He prayed with confident expectation.

He prayed and he said to his servant, Go up and look. Do you see anything? I'm expecting something. And he came back.

Go again, came back, go again, came back, go again. He never gave up until there was a manifestation of God's faithfulness in answer to his prayer and his promise. That's very important.

Very often we give up when victory is within our grasp. And we never have what we've been seeking the Lord for because we give up. If the servant has to go seventy times, keep praying.

God will honor his word. God is faithful. But pray with expectancy.

There's a very dear missionary in Japan. If I mentioned his name, and there were other missionaries in Japan here, they would immediately know this man. Everybody recognizes him as the great apostle of love in Japan.

Tremendous man of God. His wife was afflicted with cancer. It erupted on her face.

She went to the Southern Baptist Hospital in Kyoto. They said, You must go to the United States immediately. We cannot handle it here.

And so this dear man, tremendous preacher, prayed for his wife, took a stand of faith for his wife, believed the Lord was going to heal his wife. He didn't send her to America immediately. He waited a day or two and he was very surprised that she wasn't healed on the spot.

So he decided he would let her fly to America. And even at the last minute when they were approaching Haneda Airport, he took the dressing off her face and said, Man, you're sure it's still there? It was still there all right. She knew when she arrived in America, it wasn't there.

And that woman is still on the mission field today. She never has had the scalpel on her face. The important point is this, her husband was expecting something.

So she did. So she did. Yesterday morning, I heard a sermon in which an illustration was quoted, which Brother Eck gave at Ben Lippin last year.

Of this woman who heard a tremendous message on faith. You shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea. And she went home and there was a mountain not far from her house and she went to her window and she said to the mountain, Be removed and cast into the sea and went to bed.

And the next morning she got up and looked out the window and said, Ah, just as I said. Ah, we laughed. I suppose 90% of us are guilty of the same thing.

Well, I'm going to pray, but no buts. No buts. If God gives you a promise and God gives you assurance of the spirit, you keep praying and you keep praying and you keep expecting and God will answer you.

Yes, he will. He always will. Verse 44, And it came to pass at the seventh time that he said, Behold, there arises a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand.

And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot and get thee down that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the meanwhile that the heaven was black with clouds and wind and there was a great rain and Ahab rode and went to Jezreel and the hand of the Lord was on Elijah and he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. I want you to follow me very closely.

I'm going to condense about half an hour into 10 minutes. I want you to follow me closely. Chapter 9, verse 1. And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and with all how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah saying, So let the gods do to me and more also if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose and went for his life and came to Beersheba which belonged to Judah and left his servant there. But he himself went at age journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper tree and he requested for himself that he might die and said, It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life for I am not better than my father.

Verse 3, And when he saw that, he arose. He finished up in the wilderness. Where did Elijah make his mistake? Right throughout Elijah's life we find this statement, The word of the Lord came unto Elijah.

And what the Lord told him to do, he did. And when he did it, the power of God was manifest. Now there you have a very significant order.

First the word of the Lord to Elijah, the obedience of faith, the demonstration of God's power. Always without exception. When Jezebel threatened him, he does not seek the Lord.

Why did he not seek the Lord? When he saw that, his eye was on the danger. If only he would have knelt down and said, Lord, what do you want me to do? This was a tremendous attack by Satan because the people had to be consolidated. It's not enough to get people to make a decision in a great moment of emotion.

You've got to consolidate them. And this nation never did turn back to the Lord, despite that great demonstration of God's power. They needed Elijah now and fear gripped him.

Fear gripped him. How so? He never sought the Lord. He didn't have a word from the Lord.

The Lord didn't tell him to run. He ran because he was afraid. That's where he made his mistake.

And he finished up in the wilderness. And here we find the inconsistency of the man. He runs because Jezebel threatens to kill him, and now he says to the Lord, take my life.

When men do not get a word from the Lord, they can be terribly inconsistent. Running away because he's afraid the Queen's going to kill him, and now he says, Lord, take my life. It's a wonderful thing the Lord never even answered his prayer.

He just ignored him and put him to sleep. And he never did answer that prayer because he took him to heaven in a whirlwind. He just ignored that prayer.

Verse 5, And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and he said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and behold, there was a cake bacon on the coals and a cruise of water at his head. And he did eat and drink and laid him down again.

And the angel of the Lord came again the second time and touched him and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. Now I've said before, and I say again, that Elijah, I believe, suffered a nervous breakdown due to emotional exhaustion. And what Elijah needed at this moment was food and sleep.

And the Lord was very gracious to him and didn't rebuke him. He didn't say a word to him. He just put him to sleep and he gave him good food.

But when the time came, verse 8, And he arose and did eat and drink and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, and to Horeb, the mount of God. And he came sizzle unto a cave and lodged there. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him.

And he said unto him, Elijah, what doest thou here? Elijah. Now, the Lord did not tell him to go to that mount. He didn't tell him to go there.

He went there. I believe, here you have the overruling providence of God. And possibly Elijah thought, if there is anywhere I can meet God and I've got to meet him, it's at Horeb.

And then this question, what doest thou here, Elijah? What are you doing here? If there's any one word that frightens me, it's that. I never want to be in a place where God will have to say to me, what are you doing here? And if I were you, I wouldn't want to be in that place either. What are you doing here? Now, I want you to notice very carefully his answer.

Verse 10. And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts. For the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy notice, and slain thy prophets with the sword.

And I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away. Now, there's a very important point here. Of course, there are many important points.

But the important point is this. I want you to notice this. He had completely forgotten the great victories on Carmel.

Completely forgotten. And when a man gets out of the will of God and he's doing what he wants to do and he's dictated, his actions are dictated by circumstance, he becomes self-centered. And he's utterly self-centered.

I've been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts. For the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy notice, and slain thy prophets with the sword. He didn't mention Carmel.

He didn't mention the great demonstration of God's power in the rain. He's completely forgotten them. And that's what happens sometimes to us.

We are faced with a challenge. And if we're not walking with the Lord and we're in a backslidden condition, we begin to move and we begin to pressure here and pressure there to control the circumstances. Who can I get to help me here? What will they do? What can they do? Self-centered.

And we forget the great victory that the Lord has won for us in our life. And we know it's true. And that's very sad.

So the Lord has to show him something. The man in this condition has to be shown something. And what does he have to be shown? Has to be shown the power of God.

And God will go to great pains in order that he might reveal to us his power to bring us to the place where we ought to be. And he does this with Elijah. Verse 11, he said, Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord.

And behold, the Lord passed by in a great and strong wind, rent the mountains and break in pieces the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake.

But the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire.

And after the fire, a still small voice. Now that was quite a wind. A great and strong wind rent the mountains and break in pieces the rocks before the Lord.

Then an earthquake. Then a fire. Tremendous manifestations of God's power.

And after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so when Elijah heard it that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entering of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him and said, What dost thou hear, Elijah? Now you would think after that tremendous demonstration of God's power that Elijah would fall down and worship God.

Fall down and pray to him because of what he was and what he could do. He would be completely lost in his great God. You would think he would be reminded of the great victory on Carmel and thanking for that

victory and exult in that great victory.

And give him thanks for that victory. Look what he said. He said, What are you doing here, Elijah? He gave him exactly the same answer that he gave him before the demonstration of God's power.

How sad. And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine orders and slain thy prophets with the sword. And I even I only am left and they seek my life to take it away.

How sad. There's only one thing to do with a man like this. That is to dismiss him.

And that's what God does. He dismissed him. I believe he gave him a chance.

He missed it. So he dismissed him. He gave another man to do the same.

And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when thou comest anoint Hazael to be king over Syria and Jesus, the son of Nimrod, shalt thou anoint to be king of Israel and Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel, Meholah, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. In other words, you're finished.

Very sad. Why is it very sad? What is the basic sin? The basic sin is putting self in the center. That's the basic sin.

And this always leads to unbelief. That's the basic sin. That's the world's basic sin.

And here you have it with Elijah. He begins with himself and he ends with himself. Self is in the center.

God is not. Verse 18. Yet I have left me 7,000 in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

He straightened Elijah out on one point. He said, You're not the only one left with 7,000 men. A very solemn passage of Scripture.

But God is very gracious. He's very merciful. He doesn't forget his servants, even when they pass.

And Elijah stood with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration. God is very merciful. But we have much to learn.

Never do anything unless God tells you to do it. And when he tells you to do it, never turn aside. Never give up.

Never let the devil turn you in on yourself. What you are suffering and what it is costing you to do what God is telling you to do. Never be trapped into that.

It's a very easy thing to be trapped into. And you can be trapped into it when you consider the response of the people to whom you minister. And that's where he was trapped.

It's a very simple trap to fall into for a man of God. What was Elijah concerned about? What he had done, the response of the people and the wickedness of the people, and now what it's going to cost him. It's going to cost him his life.

He said, I'm at the point Lord, but I want you to take me home. I've had it. When you are faced with a situation which demands God's intervention, trust him for a promise.

Don't try to picket yourself. Trust him for it. He'll quicken a promise to you.

It may take a week, a day, it may take a week, it may take a month. Wait for it. He'll give it to you.

He may give it to you in the night. He knows what sort of days I have, so very often the Lord speaks to me two or three o'clock in the morning. That's the only time I'm still, I think.

He knows the rain he gives if you lay hold of that. And don't you let go of that promise. That's God's word to you.

He will quicken it. Don't let go of it, whatever it is. Trust him for a prayer partner so that you can symphonize, symphonize.

And what you symphonize in before the throne, claim it. And God will answer. He will answer.

He will. In your praying, trust him to bring you to that place where you ultimately seek one thing only, and that is his glory and nothing else. Nothing else.

When you get to that place, he will answer. He will answer. So what is the basic sin? The basic sin is, of course, self-centredness.

Putting ourself in the centre, sir, instead of the north. Now shall we pray? Dear Father, thou knowest that we are apt to forget very quickly. I am apt to forget very quickly the very important truths you teach us from your work.

And we realise that this message this evening has a direct bearing upon your glory as far as Bob Cassidy is concerned. Oh Lord, we long to see this city taken by the power of God. And we ask thee, dear Father, for the glory of Jesus Christ to give to us tomorrow the spirit of grace and supplication for Jesus' sake.

And Father, teach us what it means to wait upon thee for thy word. And never to move unless you tell us to move. And when we move, never to turn aside until the victory is won and the cloud is seen, which is the manifestation of thy power.

Oh Lord, hear us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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