

12/7/16
Week 50: Fall Mission Feeding
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh: "Full Armor of God"

Sheila: Hello! Welcome to Wednesdays in the Word. I'm Sheila Walsh. Thanks so much for tuning in.

As I was thinking and praying about today's show and really asking Lord, what do we need to know in these days that we're living in? The passage that came to me was really from Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, really on spiritual warfare. Now I've known that since I was a child growing up in a small Baptist church in Scotland. But it's become so much more real to me in these days.

I wanted to tell you a little story. It's about my family. I don't know how well we know each other so let me just go back to I was 38 years old when my husband Barry and I got married. I wasn't sure whether God would give us the gift of a child or not. I knew I was a little older but I really prayed that that would be possible. Maybe about when I turned 39 we discovered that I was pregnant and we were absolutely over the moon as you can imagine. The ultrasound, the nurse told us that we were expecting a boy and I was thrilled about that. My sister is more the kind of girlie girl. I've always been more a tomboy so the thought of being a mom to a boy was exciting to me.

But then a few weeks later my doctor called and she said, "Something has come up in your blood work that doesn't look good." She asked me to come back in for some more tests, which I did. Then she said to me, "Yeah, there is something seriously wrong with this pregnancy." She used a phrase that I'd never heard before. She went through a procedure called an amniocentesis and when those results came back here's what she said to Barry and I. She said, "You just need to know that your child is not compatible with life."

It's a pretty stunning thing to hear. I remember I was driving home quietly. The doctor had said, "It is my recommendation that you terminate this pregnancy tomorrow." I'd said to her, "Absolutely not. I'm not going to do that."

But when we got home my husband went inside and I took the car down to the beach where we lived. It was a hard morning. I'll never forget it sitting on the place that was really the place

where I'd go every morning with a cup of coffee and my Bible. I sat there thinking Lord, you saw this coming. I did not. I kind of don't know what to do.

And I spoke to my little boy, even though he was just a few weeks old and I said this to him. I said, "Well, I don't know if you heard that or not but I want you to know I'm going to fight for you. I'm going to fight for every single day of life that God has assigned for you to live."

And while we got further along in our pregnancy, got all the way to 30 weeks, 35 weeks -- when I was 38 weeks pregnant my doctor called and she said, "Sheila, I don't know how to tell you this but the day that your results came back the results of another 40-year-old patient came back and your results went in her chart and her results went in your chart and there's never been anything wrong with your baby."

Before I was able to fall down on my knees and thank the Lord for that I suddenly thought of another woman getting a very different phone call. She was receiving news that would be the hard news that I'd been told so many months before.

But I really believe in the sovereignty of God. You can't be almost sovereign. I often wondered if God allowed me to carry that woman's burden. But as my son is now 19 years old, about to turn 20 and at college, I've told him over and over, "Christian, I want you to know not only will I fight for you, not only would dad fight for you but you have a God who fights for you."

And in this world, which is becoming increasingly challenging we have not been left ill-equipped to know how to fight. So if you have your Bibles there at home, in your hotel, just open the drawer beside your bed, I bet there's one in there. This passage might be really familiar to you but I think it's never been more relevant than it is right now. I'm reading of course, on that passage called, "The whole armor of God."

And this is what Paul said. I'm just going to read the first couple of verses here from 10-12 at the moment:

A final word, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil for we are fighting not against flesh and blood enemies but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

Interesting, when Paul says, "stand firm against all strategies of the devil." I don't know what you think of when you think of his strategies but I think of things like discouragement, disappointment, disillusionment. Maybe you look at what is going on in your family and you

think, Lord, where are you? Do you see what's happening in our finances? Do you see what's happening in my marriage? Do you see what's happening with my children? That is why we are called to stand strong and recognize who our enemy is.

It says here "we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies." It is so easy to think my enemy is my husband or my enemy is that woman at church who drives me bonkers. But behind everyone who comes out with some kind of words against you the enemy is always there.

One of the things that my son struggles with most is saying things like -- you know there are times in life where you think God, life is just not fair. When I used to pick him up in car pool lane I could immediately. He was easy to read when he was a little boy if he'd had a good day or he'd had a bad day. I picked him up one day and I thought, oh, dear. Things did not go well. So he got in the back of the car and he's a boy so he's not going to talk about first. So I took him to a place that's like a place of healing for us -- yes, the ice cream parlor.

And after he'd had his fill he said, "Mom, do you want to know what happened to me today?"

I said, "Of course, I do, darling."

He said that this boy who was one of his best friends had knocked over his desk, knocked over his pencils and then blamed Christian.

And he said, "I got in trouble twice; once for knocking over my desk, which I didn't do, and twice for tattling." He said, "I said to my friend at lunchtime, 'You need to tell the teacher that you did it. I didn't do it.' He said he wasn't going to do it, mom. So here's what I've decided. One, he's no longer my friend. And two, he is off my prayer list."

"I totally get that dude; that's harsh stuff."

Well, later that night after dinner I said to him, "Christian, would you go get that bag of flour? That big bag I got at Costco? You and I are going to go for a walk and it's going to be kind of like an experiment." So we headed off.

So we walked quite a bit across the golf course where we live and he's only six or seven and the bag is so heavy and he kept saying, "Mom, can I put it down?"

I'm like, "No, no! You're going to need it."

And eventually he gets so tired that he just flopped down and he said, "Mom, I can't carry this anymore."

I sat there beside him and I said, "Darling, that's what it looks like when you don't forgive. Your friend's probably been asleep for 20 minutes. You're the one out here carrying the weight." I said, "The thing is, Christian, you want life to be fair but here's the truth. Fair doesn't live here but Jesus does. Fair doesn't live here, but Jesus does."

I think the greatest thing that I've learned about forgiveness is that forgiveness is God's gift to us to live in a world that is not fair. I just want to remind you today that one of the ways that the enemy can trip us up is when we refuse to forgive because we think what happened is not forgivable.

So let's take another look at some of the ways that God has provided protection and armor for us in his Word. I'm reading on from Ephesians six. This is verse 13: Therefore -- therefore is because we have an enemy who is fighting against us.

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so that you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle -- makes it clear there will be a battle -- after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground. Put on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness, for shoes put on the peace that comes from the good news so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet and take the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God.

So let's look at this armor. What would that mean to those who were listening? It says: Put on the belt of truth.

I don't know if you've ever seen a soldier, a Roman soldier. Perhaps you can Google the image but the belt was a very, very important part of the uniform he wore. It was where he kept his sword, it's where he kept his daggers, and it's where he kept all sorts of things. But here's what I think Paul is saying to us. The belt encircles a soldier. I think he is saying to us, circle your life with truth.

In scripture it says, I think it is John 8:32: Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

One of the things we know about our enemy is that he is a liar and he is the accuser of God's children. So when we surround ourselves with the truth of the Word of God then we're able to stand against the lies of the enemy.

The next thing that is significant in a soldier's armor is this breastplate of righteousness. And the point of that is it was quite an impressive looking thing, but the main thing that it protected was the heart. It covered a soldier's heart so that he was not exposed to an arrow or to a sword or even to a dagger.

Interestingly enough, if you look at a Roman soldier's outfit the breastplate of righteousness or his armor was actually attached to the belt. So if belt came loose and fell off so did the breastplate. In other words, so often we spend so much of our life thinking we have to get it right.

I did that for years. I gave my life to Christ when I was 11 and I spent so many years trying to be the perfect Christian, trying to get it right. If you've ever been there, it's exhausting, until I finally began to understand that it's the righteousness of Christ that covers our heart. So that's another way the enemy attacks because he may want to come up to you and say, "Remember what you did last night? Remember what you did last week? You're not a holy person. You're not a righteous person. God is not going to forgive you."

But you have to just say hey, I'm covered in the righteousness of Christ. And that covers your heart, but only when you're surrounding your life with the belt of truth to hold all that together.

Paul also talked about wearing the shoes of peace. There's something about, if you have the best equipped soldier in the world but you send him into battle and there's nothing on his feet he's not protected from what he's standing on. He could easily hurt himself or trip over -- in fact, it is one of our priorities here at *LIFE*, if you know that about us.

One of the things we love to do, particularly in this last season you knew that, maybe last month, we put shoes on the feet of little ones because we're like, you know what? We're covering up your feet. We're going to keep you free from disease.

But there is something here that Paul is saying, put on the shoes; that peace comes from the good news. Jesus has said, "In this world you will have trouble but take heart, I've overcome the world."

I've discovered that peace, the peace that Christ offers, that covers us, it is not the absence of trouble, it is his presence. That's something I often remind myself if I'm having a bad day or like even today I heard a bit of bad news about a friend and I remind myself, peace is not the absence of trouble, it is the presence of Christ.

You might find yourself in a really dark place right now and if you do, can I just remind you that we're here for you. We have the most amazing prayer warriors who love to pray for you. That even though we're grateful, so grateful for the way you reach out and you help us to help others around the world, we're here for you. If you're struggling, if you're having a dark day, if you're having a bad time, let us join with you and pray.

Then we go on to these where we hold up the shield of faith. I love this. It's the first time that there's actually like kind of an action because everything else is something we put on to protect ourselves. But then we're told, "Hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil." I think that often we get discouraged when we forget who we are, and when we forget whose we are.

The shield of faith, if you look at one of the shields that the Roman soldiers used -- very impressive, very big, covered in strips of leather and metal. And here was the interesting thing. In a battle the Roman soldiers would lock their shields together so it literally, it formed a wall so that the enemy's arrows couldn't get through. You know why? That's why we need each other. We're not made to do this journey by ourselves.

I don't know if you've found a good church yet but I cannot recommend more highly that you find a place where you can just fit in. Sometimes you think well, I'll just watch television and I'll just read my Bible. No, you need your brothers and sisters. Jesus Christ said he is coming back for his bride, the church. Don't look for a perfect church because there will be a chance that I'll be there that Sunday so it won't be perfect. Just look for a place that believes in the Word of God and throw yourself in so that you're able to hold up that shield of faith with others and not let the enemy through.

But here's the thing that I thought was kind of interesting that I never really thought about before. It talks about taking out the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God. Now I've always thought that is the sword of the spirit and the Word of God is the whole Bible. That's not what it is saying here in the Greek. The word that's used here for sword is the word you would use for a dagger. It's like hand-to-hand combat. And the word that is used here for the Word of God is a small W, it is not meaning the whole of God's Word, it means specific promises. Which means that you and I need to work out where the areas are where you and I are vulnerable. Like do you really struggle with anxiety?

Find the verse: Be anxious for nothing but in everything with prayer and supplication, with Thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the God of all peace will keep your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. Write that out on a three-by-five card so that when you feel that fiery dart coming at you of feeling anxious or scared, you can hold up that piece of the word of God, whatever it is.

I think of Psalm 27, verse 1: The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

Find out all the areas where you believe your life to be vulnerable to the lies of the enemy and find those promises from the Word of God. If you can memorize them, fantastic! I'm getting to that age where things go in one ear and slip right out the other so I copy them out. I have them on little sticky notes in my car, I have them on my mirror. And every time you are attacked that way, that is what Paul is saying. Have those ready, those promises from the Word of God ready so that you are able to attack the enemy and not allow him to bring discouragement to your life.

As Paul made it so clear, we have not been left unprotected but here's the deal. Armor is no use unless you put it on. You can have the most expensive, perfect, beautiful armor in the world but if it sits in your closet it is not going to protect you against an enemy and it is the same with the Word of God. We have not been left unprotected in this world.

Scripture says that in the last days the love of many will grow cold. I don't want that to happen to one of you. I don't want that to happen to me. So that when this battle is over, when Christ finally takes us to be with him, we will be standing strong.

So I really encourage you to do that. It's become a daily habit. Even when Christian was a little boy, what I would do as I was folding his clothes, and I still do it today for my husband, as I'm folding the clothes I'm praying the protection of the Word of God over his life. But just to you, as my sister or as my brother, I really want to encourage you, every single day before you head out into this world whether that's the office where you work or at school, maybe you're a college kid, maybe you're a stay-at-home mom, maybe you've retired, no matter where it is, we all need to be fully dressed in the armor of God.

I love the fact that when the great Goliath came against David what he didn't realize, what David maybe didn't have is a soldier's armor on but he had a soldier's heart because he knew who his God was.

I met a woman who is quite a warrior on a recent trip. Initially, just to look at her life it looked like everything was bad news, everything was defeat but the moment that I mentioned a certain name to this woman her eyes lit up and it became clear that even though she lives in a village in Angola she dresses in the armor of God every day. Watch this.

On the mission field

Open captioning:

>> As a mother, I feel like a failure because two of my children died.

Sheila: Armeda is a dedicated and hard-working mother but all the work she can find barely produces enough for one tiny meal a day.

Open Captions:

>> It start with lack of food, malnutrition, then leads to other terrible diseases. It's really hard for me to think back to the times when they passed away.

Sheila: We were amazed that she could go on like this. But then we noticed the name across her forehead. When we asked her about it she lit up.

Open Captions:

>> Jesus is the only hope we have. When we go to sleep, we pray, "Jesus, thank you for sustaining us for another day." It is our belief that whenever we sleep, whenever we wake, we depend on Him. That is why I wear His name on my head.

Sheila: Her prayer is a prayer of faith. This is a woman of faith. I just think what an incredible opportunity because you and I, we get the opportunity to be the answer to her prayer. What a joy!

There are women like this all across these villages. They are trusting Jesus for everything. So why don't you and I decide we will be the answer to her prayer? We can make her life a little easier as she continues to honor Christ with every single breath she takes.

Open Captions:

>> My children are a gift from God, and my hope is that I can provide for those I have left so they can grow up and make it in society.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: What a beautiful face. I'll never forget that woman. And sitting in that little rough chapel with her, just dirt on the ground, a very simple altar, and yet it was a holy place because she goes there to meet with Jesus.

The thought of our ability to be a direct answer to that woman's prayer is just overwhelming to me. There is something about her that all of the team, you get to see me and maybe a couple of others that are there but there was quite a team of us there from *LIFE*. We were so touched by this woman. I said to her, I actually asked her, "At nighttime when you go to bed and maybe

you've been able to feed your four children," she's buried two but she still has four, "and you have nothing in your stomach, what do you do?"

And her face lit up again as she says, "Oh, I say this, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.'"

I thought Lord, I want to be the answer to this woman's prayer and I know you do too. Thank you so much for the way that you have responded. This is so doable. If you send just \$30 that provides food for three children for three months! Isn't that amazing? \$50 feeds five children for three months and \$100 feeds ten children for three months!

But the wonderful news that we have at the moment is some of our friends and partners who have worked with us for a long time, some of them have been there and seen the need themselves, they've said, "Listen. We're going to do a matching gift."

They've actually put up \$400,000. So it means that when you give \$30 you don't just feed three children for three months, it's doubled -- you feed six children! Can you imagine that? For \$30 you would feed that woman's family and one other little boy or girl for a whole three months. And if you give \$100 that immediately is going to feed 20 children.

There is so much about our nation that is wonderful and there is so much that's about excess. Particularly during this time of the year we eat too much, we spend too much and I think of that woman laying her head down in a very simple hut, four children who don't have very much food in their stomach but it is all that she could give them and she is kneeling beside the bed of her children thanking God that she was able to give them that and believing more. It was so clear to me. This is not just some woman in Africa, this is our sister in Christ and we can partner with her.

So would you go to your phone? Would you give the best possible gift? Perhaps you'd like to do it online. You can go to LifeToday.org. Or maybe if you're sending a check; but would you call us and just let us know so that we know we can get all the provisions in place? Let's be the answer to this mom's prayer and so many other moms in those villages in Africa. Thank you!

Begin video clip

Announcer: In remote and impoverished villages of Africa children are suffering, desperately in need of life saving food, facing death by starvation.

LIFE's mission feeding program is there, ready now to feed and care for children in crisis areas of Angola, Mozambique, and Sudan. With all of our previous reserves gone, and Angola facing a record food shortage due to crop failure, we need to immediately replenish our funding and supplies for our feeding programs.

As an answered prayer, a group of *LIFE's* friends have set a \$400,000 matching gift challenge for mission feeding! This means your gift today could have a double impact! \$30 for three children will be doubled to help feed six children! \$50 to help five children will be doubled to save ten children! And \$100 for ten children will be doubled to help feed 20 children! And don't forget, your \$1400 gift to sponsor a school will now be doubled to feed children in two schools!

With your gift of any amount, we'll send you *Without Rival* by author Lisa Bevere. With your double impact gift of \$100 or more please request *The Complete Illustrated Children's Bible*. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1000, which will now be doubled to help feed 200 children and you may request our beautiful Majesty bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

On the mission field

Betty: This little baby cries because he doesn't know me. I'm a stranger to him. That's natural for a child to do that when they don't know who it is. But we hear the tears of a lot of them and the crying because they haven't had anything to eat, because they're starving. We want to wipe those tears away for those children. Would you please join with us?

We're here now in a place where the children have been fed and they're dancing, they're laughing, they're playing like children should. And yet, crying like that, there are so many that are starving. Some of them are too weak to cry because they don't have the energy anymore. Please help us. Join with us now.

We love you. We care about you and we want you to care about these babies that we're showing you today that need our help.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. The other thing we can do is if you can give a gift of \$1400, which is possible for some of you, that feeds a whole school in a village for three months. But it means with our matching gift you will actually be feeding two whole schools in Africa for three months. The great news about that is if the parents know or the mom knows, sometimes there is no father there, that their child is going to get a meal, they will send that child to school because so often the mothers say, "We can't send our children to school. They haven't eaten. They'll faint on the way." Some of them walk three or four miles. But if they know they're getting a meal, they will show up.

So thank you so much! For any gift we'll send you this great book from Lisa Bevere, and so many other things.

Until next time on Wednesdays in the Word, I'm Sheila Walsh. God bless you!