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Week 5: WFL

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh: “Overcoming Disappointment”

Sheila: Hi! I’m Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*.

Sometimes when you find yourself at the beginning of a new year, we’ve got a whole year ahead of us; it might be a time when you make resolutions, “This year I’m going to lose those 10 pounds. I’m going to do this! I’m going to exercise.” Well, as we got closer to the end of January, maybe you’ve already dropped some of those balls. It is just part of the reality of life I think that there are some parts of life that are disappointing. We get disappointed in small things. It could be like you go out for a meal at a restaurant and you think it’s going to great. The food arrives and it’s okay but it’s not what you hoped. Or it could be your team, whatever team you support and you just knew they were going to make it to the Super Bowl and they didn’t.

But some disappointments in life are a lot bigger than that and that’s what I want you and I to look at today. How do we deal with disappointment? And what does disappointment do to us? How does it impact our relationship with God?

I was reading one of my favorite books in the Bible. If we get to hang with each other on a few of these Wednesdays you’ll get to know this; I love the book of Romans. There is something about the book of Romans that’s such a complete theology. Chapter eight is probably my favorite chapter in the whole Bible. You have a chapter that begins with no condemnation and ends with no separation. That’s pretty amazing. But today I want us to look at the first few verses of Romans chapter five, and Paul is talking specifically about the hope we have in Christ and how that will not lead to disappointment.

Let me read to you just a few verses from the beginning of Romans chapter five. I’m reading from the New Living Translation. Here’s what he said:

Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith...

Not by what we do, not by how many of your resolutions you kept. We’re made right in God’s sight by faith.

*We have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. 2
Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege...*

I wonder how that sits with you today. It is easy to look out at what's happening in somebody else's life and compare your life. But honestly, if you got to go on some of the trips I get to go on, if you got to see what it's like for a mother who has to put her children to bed at night who are hungry or who don't have clean water to drink, you realize that you and I are in a place of undeserved privilege. Not only as we watch this show but also in our relationship with Christ:

...This place of underserved privilege where we now stand and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. 5 And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

I find it interesting that the actual translation of that verse is "this hope will not allow us to be put to shame." If you look at the original Greek there it's "you won't be shamed by the hope you have – you won't be disgraced." It's not as if you've placed all your hope in a god that you actually can't see with your eyes and one of these days you're suddenly going to realize that you were wrong. No. Paul is saying, "no." This hope that you have will never put you to shame.

But sometimes disappointment happens and you think is there a connection between disappointment and shame? That's what I've spent the last few days kind of praying about and looking into scripture and digging deep. Why would disappointment lead to shame? But the more I thought about it the more I saw that in the life of my mother-in-law. When I first started dating my husband, Barry all I knew was his mom and dad lived in Charleston, South Carolina and they had tried for, oh gosh, I think 12 or 13 years to get pregnant and finally Barry was born. So they were thrilled to have a child, just one son. After we had been dating a few months he said, "Would you like to meet my mom and dad?"

I said, "I'd love to!"

So I think it was Thanksgiving time and we flew to Charleston and his mom and dad met us at the airport. Well, the minute I met them I knew that I was going to love them and particularly his dad, William was just the most charming, lovely, funny man. They drove me to their lovely house that they had lived in for 43 years in Charleston. Well, the minute I walked into that living room it was like shrine of Barry. There were pictures everywhere – colored pictures, things in black and white, things in charcoal, things in velvet, things where his eyes moved and followed you around the room. It was spooky, people!

I soon realized that it was actually going to be hard for Eleanor to have another woman in her son's life. It didn't really become much of an issue until we were married and I said to Barry, "Listen. I want your mom and dad to understand. It's not like they've lost a son but their family's got bigger. We're going to include them in our lives."

So I said, "Why don't you invite your mom and dad to come and stay with us for a few days."

So they did and on the second day Eleanor stopped talking to me. I mean completely. She came down and I said, "Good morning, Mom. Would you like a cup of coffee?" Nothing! Eventually I said to her, "Mom, if I've hurt your feelings I'm so sorry. But if I don't know what I've done, I don't know how to fix this."

But she just wouldn't talk to me. Later on that day, Barry said, "Listen Mom. This is my home, this is my wife, if you can't talk then you should just go home."

So she went home. I honestly thought, Lord, what do I do here? I don't know how to get through, how to cross this barrier. Well, then I became pregnant at 40 years of age and that would be their only grandchild. I have to say, even though she was challenging as a mother-in-law she was fantastic grandmother to Christian. At that point, I was part of a movement called *Women of Faith*. We had maybe 30 arena events a year and I took Christian with me. Everywhere I went, I took him with me.

One day Eleanor called and she said, "I just received some news. I discovered that I have liver cancer and they have given me 18 months to two years to live."

I said, "Mom, let's fly you into..." we were living in Nashville at the time. "Let's get a second opinion."

So we did but the doctor confirmed that that was correct and Eleanor flew home.

Maybe two or three weeks later I got a phone call and it was Eleanor to say, "I've made a decision."

I said, "Okay. What's that?"

She said, "I've decided that everywhere you go for at least the next year, I'm coming with you."

"Wow!" I said, "That's amazing!" I asked her a couple of questions, "Mom, what are we going to do about your chemotherapy? You have a lot of treatment."

She said, "Well, I'll just take the *Women of Faith* schedule to my doctor and say, 'Can you work around it?'"

Honestly, in my spirit I felt the Lord say, "Sheila, just get out of the way."

So that's what happened for the next, I guess 12-13 months Eleanor travelled with us everywhere we went. It wasn't much easier between she and I, but it was beautiful to watch the way she was with our son. She so desperately wanted to be healed. We would bring her back stage at *Women of Faith* and our tour pastor would anoint her with oil and we would pray for her but it became clear at some point that she was getting weaker and weaker and that perhaps healing on this earth was not God's plan.

So she was moved into Hospice care in her home in Charleston and Barry and Christian and I just moved into the house to help take care of her. I took the night shift. I would stay up with her at night. What ultimately I did is I would get into bed beside her and she was a Lutheran and she loved the great Lutheran hymns of the faith. So while I thought she was sleeping at night I would just quietly sing through the hymn book. One night, when I thought she was asleep, she said this, "If it was you, God would have healed you."

I said, "Mom, why would you say that?"

She said, "Well, think about it, Sheila. I've done some things in my life that I'm not very proud of, some things I'm kind of ashamed of." She said, "I know I haven't exactly made your life very easy."

I was like, "I have no idea what you mean." [Nervous laugh]

But I could hear the cry of her heart. I said, "Listen Mom. God does not love me one grain of sand more than He loves you." I said, "What did you sing to Christian just this morning?"

She sang, "Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong; they are weak but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me."

It was so... it felt like holy ground that night to be able to meet my mother-in-law in a place where she could finally tell the truth that really, she was desperately disappointed that she wasn't going to get the answer she prayed for on this earth. The way that tied in with shame was she thought it was her fault. She thought if she had lived a better Christian life that somehow God would have intervened and healed her.

I wonder how often we think that. We think the reason that God answered that woman's prayer is because she is closer to Jesus. The reason that that woman's husband came back was because they've led a better life. I don't know what you're facing in your life right now but I want you to know you are not alone.

In fact, the Psalmist David, Psalm 34 is one of my favorite Psalms but you need to really put it in context with what's happening in David's life at the time that he wrote this. You might remember from David's story that even though he knew he had been anointed to become the king of Israel, at this moment when he wrote the Psalm, King Saul is still in charge. At this point

in King Saul's life, he's literally mad. He's lost touch with God. He's lost touch with everyone around him and he's actually trying to kill David. So David, a young man runs for his life and he ends up in a town where when the people recognized who he is he realizes his life is in danger. So do you know what he did? He pretended to be insane. David, the future king of Israel, the man considered the greatest king that Israel has ever known was found crawling around the streets drooling on his beard, and scratching at doors. Eventually, do you know what the king said? "Why did you bring him here? We've got enough of our own crazy people in town. Get him out of here!" So once more David runs for his life and he finds himself in a cave and he writes this:

I will praise the lord at all times.

I will constantly speak his praises.

4 I prayed to the lord, and he answered me.

He freed me from all my fears.

5 Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;

no shadow of shame will darken their faces.

You don't write about shame, you don't write about fear unless you've lived with shame, unless you've lived with fear. One of the things I love about the life of King David was that no matter how many disastrous choices he made, and many of them cost other people their lives. He knew where to run for help when he was in trouble.

Toward the end of that summer, probably one of my favorite verses in all of scripture, Psalm 34:17. If you've got a piece of paper, write that down. There might be a moment when you need it soon. There might be a moment when someone you meet needs it. Here's what he says in Psalm 34:17:

The lord hears his people when they call to him for help.

He rescues them from all their troubles.

18 The lord is close to the brokenhearted;

He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

I don't know what your life has been like up until now. I don't know what it is like even now as you sit with what's reality, what's true for you but what I do want you to know is this hope you have in Christ, this faith, this absolute conviction that no matter where you are at the moment will not put you to shame as long as you know where to run.

There have been many moments in my life when I've had to literally, sometimes physically get out of a place so I can be alone with the Lord. Maybe you work in a place that makes it very difficult for you. Perhaps as you're watching – maybe you're watching this in a hotel room and you're literally on the run for your life. I want you to know there is one place where you can run and you will always be met with the Lord who is close to the broken hearted and who saves those whose spirits are crushed.

I watched my mother-in-law, Eleanor find in her dying what she'd longed for in her living, a relationship with Christ that was nothing – nothing to do with what she brought to the table. So often we think we have to be good enough. I remember that so clearly in my own life. If you know some of my story you know that I was hospitalized at one point for clinical depression. And I remember after three weeks in the hospital being told, "Listen. If you like you can go to a movie for a day or you can go to the mall. We'll send a young nurse with you."

I said, "No. I just want to go to a church. I don't care which denomination as long as it's a Bible-believing church. As long as the man in pulpit believes that this is the word of life, that's what I want to do."

So I was taken and I sat in the very back row. Sometimes you come to the end of yourself and that's where I was. I'd spent so much of my life up until that point thinking that God loved me because of what I brought to the table. I was on television, I was a musician, I did, did, did so that God wouldn't stop loving me.

But when you end up in a psych hospital, you know really that part of your life is over. There's nothing impressive left to say about yourself. I don't remember all the sermon that morning but I do remember this. At the end of the message the pastor said this. He said, "Some of you in here," maybe some of you watching right now, "feel as if you've come to the end of yourself. It's as if you can hear them begin to heap the earth on top of your casket. But I want you to know one thing. Jesus is here and you don't even have to get yourself out of that hole, you just have to call on His name and He will reach in and grab hold of you and pull you free."

I didn't know what the protocol for that kind of church was but at the end of that service I literally ran to the altar and I lay face down before the cross. And what kept coming back to me was a hymn that my grandmother used to sing to me when I was just a little girl. The hymn was "Rock of Ages" but it was these two lines: "Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling."

I finally got it. I'm not the good news, Jesus is. That began for me a journey that will continue until Christ takes me home or until He returns and gathers us all up in a moment. But we are loved not because of what we bring, we're loved because of who He is.

I don't know what you've done. Maybe as you've started off this new year you feel you've failed already. You've made too many mistakes. Maybe you feel you're a disappointment. Maybe you've even been told you're a disappointment. I want you to know that you are loved by God. Your identity is not based on being so-and-so's wife, or so-and-so's mom or somebody else's husband or wife or having a great job – none of that! If you love Jesus, your identity is as a daughter of the King of kings, a son of the Most High God and nobody can touch that. That's the beauty! You know that everything else, every other title, every other label can be gone in a moment. That doesn't touch your true identity: son of the Most High God -- daughter of the King of kings.

When I used to tuck my little boy into bed at night I would say to him, "Which boy does mommy love?"

And he would put his little hand on his face and he would say, "This boy!"

You know what I did after that, and I continue to this day when I catch my reflection in the mirror? On the good days and the not-so-good days I ask myself this question, "Which girl does Jesus love? This girl!" That's the same for you, man or woman, child, you're the beloved daughter/son of the King of kings.

Now I would like to introduce you to some people who cried out to God in the middle of their disappointment and He heard them.

On the mission field

Sheila: Does the water ever make the children sick?

[Man translates to woman]

Woman: [Answers affirmatively]

Man: Yes.

Sheila: Would you ask her if any of the children in this village have died from drinking the water?

[Man translates to woman]

Sheila: So she is going to take us and we'll get to see with our own eyes the kind of water that is her only choice to give her children.

Oh, my gosh! This is what she comes to. I mean this water is filthy.

I notice the mom, she kind of tried to clear it as if somehow that would get rid of the germs or would get rid of the disease. But you can see this water is absolutely filthy! Look at what she is pouring in here. This is all they have.

I asked them, "Do you drink this?"

And she said, "Yeah. We just wait 'til the mud settles and then we drink it."

So that's why so many children in these villages are dying because there is so much disease in this water. And that's why *Water for Life* literally means that. When we put up a well in a village we give life to the whole village for their whole life.

And the need is urgent and the need is now. Will you please stand with us? Will you help us to give life to children who otherwise are drinking this and dying?

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I'll never forget that. It was one of those... you have moments in life that just mark you because as I walked behind the mom I thought, this could be me. I just happened to be born in Scotland. I happen to live in America now. She happened to be born in Africa but this could be me with my child going to get water. When I saw what it was, I even thought things like well, can they boil the water? I realized that most of them don't have the resources to be able to even boil it but even if they did that doesn't get rid of the disease. There's yellow fever there. Some of the diseases are absolutely devastating.

I thought, what a choice for a mom to think if I give my child no water they will die. It is a terrible death. To die of thirst is a desperately painful death. But to give your child the only water that is available knowing that there is a pretty good chance that the very water you're giving them will actually hasten their deaths. What a Sophie's choice for a mom!

But here is what I saw. I saw that this is so fixable. We have a goal this year and I know we can do it. I'm going to join with you in this. What we want to do is put 188 wells in a 188 African villages. I've been in the villages where there is a water well and the children are different there. They dance and they sing and they laugh and they're just kids like your kids and my kid. But I've been in a village where the water is like that and it's like there's this sadness over the village because every single mother has lost at least one child.

Would you join with us? For \$48, which isn't much really, you'll provide clean water for 10 people. \$144 will give clean water for 30 people. And if you're able and I know some of you are, for \$4800 you can actually be the one to drill a well in one village. Do you know you will have impacted that whole village – the mothers, the fathers, the elders and the greatest thing about being part of *LIFE Today* is after we've been able to give them water we tell them why we came and we tell them who sent us and we talk to them about the kind of water Jesus talked about. That whoever comes to Him will never thirst again. But you start where they're thirsty, you start where they're needy. You don't preach the gospel to a mom who is burying her child. You start by providing clean water.

So let's exceed the goal this year. Wouldn't it be brilliant if halfway through this year we have to come up with a new challenge because we've already met it? We can do this together. Please go to your phone. Dial that number on your screen and say, "Yes, I'm going to help. I'm going to do something now." Or go online, go to LifeToday.org and commit your gift. And literally, you will be giving water for life!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Every day children living in extreme poverty are forced to make a dreadful choice, drink filthy polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

Our teams have recently located remote villages in southern Africa where children are dying from contaminated, disease ridden water. The situation is desperate. They need clean disease-free water immediately.

With your gift today you can help drill 188 water wells in remote villages across seven African nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift we'll send you Sheila Walsh's devotional, *5 Minutes with Jesus*, a fresh infusion of joy to help you find perspective in the midst of daily life and experience a deeper connection with God.

With your gift of \$100 or more you'll also receive our No Greater Name canvas, a beautiful artistic expression of our savior's name and a daily reminder of his presence in your life.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well. And you may request our beautiful new hand-painted "Determined Eagle" bronze sculpture.

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

End of clip

On the mission field

James: Let me just say this about the well. Here we are in an area where over 2,000 children have just been fed but the whole thing started not only with a need for food but also providing water which became the center of life. Now there is a school here. So you've got school feeding, you've got fresh water. They're not only drinking it and the whole village area using it as a water source but they're washing – they're desperate to clean up their dishes with clean water!

I'm telling you the wells like this that you can have a part in either giving the well or giving a portion of it, it changes everything in the entire area. But you can help give other wells here in Africa. Please do it because it's going to take all of us working together. And it takes people just like you providing as love provided here. Do what you can to help us drill more wells please.

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! Isn't it great to think that you and I can make a difference? We might not meet these moms and children on this earth but we'll meet them again in eternity.

And for any gift at all I will send you my new book, *5 Minutes with Jesus: A Fresh Infusion of Joy*. If you can send \$1200 or build a well, then we're going to send you this beautiful, "Determined Eagle." Those that wait on the Lord will renew their strength. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it. If you haven't called yet, please call.

Remember, if you ever need us, we're here for you. We thank you that you are here for the people that we care about and that you respond to that. But never forget, if you're having a hard day, we're here for you.

So I'm Sheila Walsh with *Wednesdays in the Word*. I'll see you next time! God bless you.

Announcer: In his new book, *Living Amazed* James Robison shares how divine encounters can change your life. *Living Amazed* -- coming soon to online and retail bookstores.