

3/22/17

Week 13: Mission: Rescue Life

Wednesdays in the Word

Sheila Walsh: "The Shelter of God's Promises: Confidence"

Sheila: Hello! I'm Sheila Walsh. I want to welcome you to *Wednesdays in the Word*.

I just wanted to take a minute before we get started with today's show to thank those of you who write letters of encouragement. One lady that wrote to me last week that she is a long distance truck driver and she has been able to listen to some of the CD's we've made available.

But I think one of the letters that has touched me most was I got a letter last week from a gentleman who said, "I was flipping through channels and I stopped on the show." He said, "I was actually in the middle of writing a suicide letter. I was saying good-bye to my wife and my family because I felt like God was so far away. And I stopped and I listened and God spoke to me and I tore the letter up."

I just want you to know, no matter what we're covering on any of our programs, we're here for you. If you need prayer, if you need someone to just agree with you, please know we are happy to do that. I'm grateful for the words of encouragement that you send.

What we're going to do for the next two or three shows is we're going to look at the promises of God. I don't know if you realize but there are over 3,000 -- yeah! Over 3,000 promises in God's word and we're going to unpack some of them and look at how they actually apply to our lives right now no matter what we might be facing in life.

Well, today I want to look at one the most quoted promises in all of scripture, Romans eight, verse 28:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

We say it with great confidence. You might even have it on a T-shirt or a mug. But do you ever find yourself in a place where you think, Lord, how could this possibly work out for good? How could any good come out of the pain that I'm in right now? So that's what we're going to look at today.

Let me tell you a little story first. When Barry and I lived in Nashville in the late '90s I was a frequent shopper, so to speak, at the Humane Society. I would stop by a couple times a week and donate supplies and play with the pets and check on which ones had been adopted since my last visit. Every now and then I would find an animal that was particularly challenged, maybe it was malnourished or the coat was in a bad way. And I would take those home for a little while and nurse it until it became more adoptable.

Well, there was one cat; his name was Max that really drew my attention. One cold night Max had crawled under the hood of a car and onto the still warm engine. Well, when the owner of the car started up the engine the next morning he heard this loud horrible cry as Max's back received a terrible wound, probably about six inches long. Well, the owner of the car was kind enough to bring Max to the shelter and the vet. He did what he could but Max was a sorry sight. He had no fur at all left on his back and the fur he did have on the rest of his body had been cut very short to remove the oil that was matted there and it was now kind of growing back at bizarre angles. They actually told me, "Max will never get adopted." So I took Max home that day.

He was one of the sweetest animals I've ever had the joy of loving. It almost seemed to me that his devotion came from someone seeing beyond his wounds, to the wonderful heart. Max couldn't hide behind a nice shiny coat of fur. You had to be able to see him as he really was inside and love him. I sometimes think, if Max hadn't had that terrible accident we'd never had the privilege of welcoming him into our home and he may have remained a stray for the rest of his life. The truth is it was his very wounds, those were the things that brought him to us.

It seems to me, don't you think that's often how God reaches us? When we feel at our very lowest, most unlovable, that's when he is able to bring us hope and purpose. Perhaps the truth is more that at our very lowest, at your most broken moments we understand our need for him much more deeply.

I'll never forget a couple that I interviewed several years ago now. On the surface they just looked like a typical Christian family, husband, wife, with two small children; and the dad was very involved in the leadership of the church. He was actually an elder. But he also had another secret life and a relationship with a man.

His wife had no idea about this part of her husband's life until she was the one that got very sick. At first they diagnosed her with a very bad case of the flu, perhaps pneumonia and she was taken into hospital to try and regulate her fever and fluids.

Well, while she was there, her husband learned from his doctor that he was now H.I.V. Positive. In utter despair, he realized that not only did he have this disease but he actually had passed it on

his wife. His doctor made it clear to him that he had to go and tell her.

This is what he did. He bought a gun and he drove to the hospital with the intention of telling his wife, facing her disgust and then finding a quiet place to kill himself. But God. God had other plans. As this husband sat by his wife's bed with tears pouring down his face, he couldn't make eye contact, he told her his story, the part of his life he had hidden from her for so long. Then he waited. He waited for her words to cut his soul to ribbons. But instead she reached across the hospital bed and she took his hand. He looked up and he saw there were tears pouring down her cheeks. And she said to him, "Do you realize this is the first time in our marriage when I feel there is no distance between us? Just truth."

It's very humbling listening to this couple share a story of such severe mercy and redemption. They were both H.I.V. Positive and yet God. In the way only God can, had used the husband's terrible secret to be able to join this couple together, not only as a couple in a way they'd never known before but to bring them closer to God. In that desperate place they were surprised by the grace of God at the worst possible moments of their lives. Yes, only God can do that.

The tremendous promise that all things work together for good to those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose is found in one of my favorite chapters in the whole New Testament, Romans chapter 8. I love it! It begins with no condemnation, and it ends with no separation. Paul explained that because of what Christ has done for us, we stand righteous in the sight of God. And also because of God's great love for us nothing in heaven or earth or below the earth can ever become between us.

Paul wrote this epistle to the Romans as they were struggling with probably the same issues that you and I do today. Like the early church, we try to get it right on our own and the truth is, none of us can. That's legalism where you just try to get it all right; it relies on our ability to earn God's grace. But grace is unmerited favor.

So Paul told these early Christians, and us, that though the law surely would condemn us but because of the finished work of Christ there is now no condemnation to those who place their trust in him. Paul reassures us that because we have been made righteous in Christ God frees us from the continual struggle to get it right. Even when things happen that we don't understand, God is in control.

I love how A.W. Tozer puts it. He writes this: "To the child of God there is no accident. He travels an appointed way."

Wow! Think about that. Think about your life through that window: No accident. Well, let me ask you. How does that sit with you? That might be difficult to come to terms with in moments

when it feels as if God's forgotten you, when life feels cruel or out of control. You might ask, how can breast cancer, how can a sick child, or any other tragedy possibly work together for good? This is a mystery that is worth you and I wrestling with because once we grasp the radical truth contained in this promise, it will change -- it will change us. It will change how we view every moment of our lives.

Remember this. Paul doesn't say everything is good or that everything feels good. He simply reminds us that because God is good he will bring good in the hardest places in life. And if we're able to embrace and receive this truth it will not only transform how we embrace the circumstances we find ourselves in but ultimately, the whole purpose of our lives which is to become more like Jesus.

In Romans 8:29 Paul goes on to say:

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son that he might be the first among many brothers and sisters.

So that is our calling, to be conformed, to be made like Christ.

I don't pretend to understand everything that you've been through but I do know this. I know you are loved and cared for by a master refiner who never takes his eyes off of you.

I was reminded of that the other day. I was reading through a book by Robert Manning and he's talking about Amy Carmichael's life as a missionary. His book is called: *The Promise*. She was a missionary in India. She took her children to see a goldsmith. They were actually watching him refine gold. He was sitting by a charcoal fire and he had a small crucible made from roofing tiles. Well, into that crucible he placed a gold nugget surrounded by salt and tamarind fruit and burned brick dust. And every now and again he would take that out, he would let it cool a little bit and he would rub the gold between his fingers. Then he would place it back in the flame and blow the fire hotter than ever before.

Well, after watching this process for awhile Amy Carmichael finally asked him, "How do you know -- how do you know when the gold is purified?"

Well, the refiner answered, "When I can see my face in it it's pure."

I know there are many things in life that happen that don't feel as if they're working together for good at all. Maybe even now you're in a place where you're so hurting and you want to believe this, you want to hold on but you're just exhausted and you find it hard to pray. Well, to those moments I want to remind you of another wonderful truth that actually just comes a couple of

verses before our promise today. Let me read it to you. If you haven't read Romans eight in a while it is amazing. Here's what it says.

This is Romans 8:26:

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for but the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that can't be expressed in words. And the father who knows all hearts knows what the spirit is saying for the spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. That leads on to -- and we know that God causes everything to work together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

We live in a fallen, broken world. But I want you to know, do you know you have a prayer partner in heaven in the midst of your brokenness? You might find yourself in a place right now where you just can't even find the words to pray. I want to remind you, if you have a Bible, maybe go grab it later and underline these words, that when you can't pray the Holy Spirit intercedes for you. It's such a glorious gift to think that there is never a moment in life when you're not prayed for.

I remember my mum telling me a story. It was not long after my father's death, and some of you who know some of my story know that my father eventually took his own life when he was just 34 years old. It was a very, very difficult time in our family. My father had become quite violent before he died. There was one night when my brother and my sister and I, we were all fast asleep and my mum was in bed but she couldn't sleep. And she said it felt as if the very air in the room got chilly and cold and she felt this whisper, this evil whisper, "There is nobody on this earth who is praying for you right now." And in that moment she was reminded of a great truth, that even when she couldn't pray for herself, the Holy Spirit was interceding at the throne of grace and mercy.

I want you to know that too. One of the greatest lies of the enemy is that we're all alone. You are never alone. God never takes his eyes off you. When I study a promise -- here's the difference. Maybe even the word *promise* doesn't mean that much to you anymore. It's got so devalued in our culture. You watch a commercial and it's, "Here's this new face cream. You'll look 20 years younger in 30 days." Don't bother! I bought the cream. It didn't work.

So sometimes the word *promise*, we transfer the kind of promises that we make or have been made to us and we place them onto God but God is not man that he should lie. And every single promise in the word of God is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. That's what scripture says, in Christ every promise of God is yes.

So let me just ask you, what is it you're dealing with right now in your life? Maybe you're tempted to think, I think the Lord has left me. I think I'm all on my own. I want you to remember that God has promised that no matter what it is, he will bring you through. An interesting thing is God wastes nothing. God redeems our tears. He redeems our pain.

Maybe you're walking through something right now and you're thinking, Lord, I can't see where any good will come of this. But I want you to remember that further down the road you may be the very one that can turn to somebody else and say, "You know what? I've been there and God is faithful."

I think it is one of the things, people sometimes say to me, "Sheila, why do you tell people how old you are?"

I say, "Because A, I earned every single one of these years." I turned 60. But part of it is the glorious truth that God has a track record with me. I gave my life to Christ when I was 11. That's a lot of walking and a lot of falling down and a lot of being picked up again by God who loves us.

So I want to just encourage you, as your older sister, if you're younger, watching this or as your sister if you're just sitting here thinking yeah, you and I are about the same stage in life. I want you to remember that maybe lots of promises have been made to you in life and they've not come true, I just want you to remember there is one who will never ever ever fail you.

So you know what I've learned? In the midst of struggle one of the greatest gifts that we can give to God is our worship. It's easy to worship when the dawn is breaking but it is a beautiful gift to worship when there is not even a sight of sunlight on the horizon. Let's do that. And once God has transformed our lives then we're able to reach out with his light to some people who are living in darkness right now. Watch this.

On the mission field

Sheila: I have seen pictures of the kind of streets, the red light district and they make it look like it's very glamorous until you actually stop outside one of these places -- until you actually look into the eyes of some of these girls who are very made up. But underneath all that makeup they're just little girls, some of them. They're not called daughter, they're not called sister, they're called like number 15 or number 17. And even further back you see these little cubicles but interestingly enough, the locks are not on the inside, the locks are on the outside.

At some point you say, "Where does this begin?" That in so many of these villages there is

abject poverty.

And suddenly, one day a guy shows up and he's got candy that these kids have never seen before. He says to them, "You know what? There is a better life."

And these children can so easily be trapped. And before they realize it, they're gone and their families never see them again.

That's where our ministry comes in. Perhaps the most important day in the lives of these children is the day when they're told there are some people out there who want to harm you but God is watching over you. You use your words, you stay together, you run, you cry out. And to watch them prepare these children not to become statistics is amazing.

The one thing that was clear to me was I can't unsee what I've seen. I can't unhear the things I've heard. We can't leave things the way they are. Part of it is reaching the villages, rescuing those who are already captured -- restore the souls. We're literally changing the world one child at a time.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: To my understanding the whole point of being a child of God, of being the church is that we are the hands and feet of Christ, not just in our home, not just in our town, but because of the way things are now we have access to the world. And now that we know what is going on in certain parts of the world we can do something.

That trip that I took to Southeast Asia was honestly the most devastating thing I've ever done in my life. I felt such helplessness and hopelessness the first two nights just walking through those areas where girls are just lined up. One of our camera guys who had been there before said, "Sheila, if you want to see the whole picture, you need to go further in."

So actually walking into these clubs and going beyond the first door to the second door -- heartbreaking. Young girls made up to look as if they are mature adults but they're children. If you look behind the pretty eye makeup there is no sparkle there, there is just a deadness.

But what I discovered is -- one of the things I love about *LIFE Today* and if you're new to us I want you to know this, we very carefully pick the partners that we work with in areas. Our heart is, Lord, what are you doing? We don't just want to go into a place and set up our own thing. We want to cast our eyes around the world and say, God, where are you moving and how can we

get behind these people? How can we support them?

That's what we've discovered in southeast Asia is amazing partners who have got it down to the most beautiful operation of reach. They will go into villages and say to children, "Listen. Here's what you need to know. Here's what you need to be aware of. If somebody comes to you, here's what you need to do. Use your voice. Use your legs. Run!"

But then rescue; they will go into these literal hellholes and rescue these children. But then there is the restore part which was just the most amazing thing to see the power of Christ in action through human hands. And you have made it possible. The House of Destiny there in Southeast Asia is amazing where these young people are learning you have value, you have worth.

But when I left my parting shot to our people was, you know what? I'm coming back. I'm coming back because there is so much more we can do. Our goal this year is to rescue 5,000 children. And the great news is it is so doable. We have some amazing partners who have said, "Listen. For every gift that someone puts up we'll double it." It takes usually \$128 to rescue one child. If you can only afford \$64 one of our partners will double it so you will have rescued a child; \$128, you will rescue two children; \$1280, you'll actually rescue not ten but 20 children.

I have seen with my own eyes what happens when you rescue these children, bring them to a place where they can be restored, and taught about the love of God. But we can only do it if you'll help us. Would you go to your phone? Would you call now and let's do that in Jesus' name.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Innocent children and young people longing to be loved and cared for are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators, their spirit and body broken under horrific emotional and physical abuse. Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to save children vulnerable to sex traffickers. You can help rescue those already enslaved and you can help restore their lives and give them a future.

Now a generous opportunity of a \$200,000 matching gift means your gift of \$128 to help rescue a child will be matched to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help rescue one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift we will send you James Robison's new book, *Living Amazed*: How divine encounters can change your life. As you read these inspiring stories you'll learn how to live

amazed in the presence of God 24 hours a day.

With your gift of \$100 or more you'll receive James's new book, along with the companion Amazed Journal so you can record accounts in your own life where you're amazed at God's goodness.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will now help rescue 20 children and you may request our beautiful new "Determined Eagle" bronze sculpture.

Please call, write, or make your secure gift online today.

End of clip

On the mission field

Lisa: These children are absolutely beautiful! They are filled with families that love them. Now they're poor -- and just because they're poor it puts them at terrible risk for being taken, for being kidnapped, for being trafficked, and forced into labor or sex trafficking. And if they get taken, nobody is going to know where to find them and people can't go after them and look for them.

We don't want to see that happen. Friends for life is building a network with partners around the world so that children in these kinds of conditions don't get trafficked, don't get taken away from their families. Won't you partner with us? I want you to pray and ask God what he would have you do. I want you to pick up your phone. I want you to go online and I want you to be a part of the Friends for Life to partner for rescue.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. It makes the world of difference! I'm teaching today from my book, *The Shelter of God's Promises* and I would love to send that to you for any gift.

Also, James' new book, *Living Amazed*. In this book you will learn how God will take any of us and if he opens our eyes and our ears we can change the world. This is one of the ways we're doing it.

This really matters. These children, they're somebody's little son and daughter who suddenly

disappeared. We can reach them. We can rescue them. We can restore them to a relationship with their father and place them back in their homes with their mom and dad.

Thank you for all you do. Remember, we're always here for you. God bless you. Please join us next time on Wednesdays in the Word.