

6/28/17
Week 27: WFL
Wednesdays in the Word
Sheila Walsh: *The Shelter of God's Promises: Home*

Sheila: Hello! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *Wednesdays in the Word*. For the last few weeks we've been looking at some of the promises of God. I think it is good to get them really deep into our hearts.

Some days you might find yourself in a situation where you don't immediately have access to your Bible. That's why I really love to commit certain promises and certain verses of scripture to heart so that if you're going through a tough time you can immediately say Psalm 127, verse one: The Lord is my light and my salvation -- whom shall I fear? The Lord is a stronghold of my life -- of whom shall I be afraid?

There's nothing -- nothing in life more powerful than the living word of God. And the promise that we're going to look at today of all the promises, surely this one offers us the greatest eternal hope and it is this promise from Christ found in John's gospel, John 14.

Jesus says this: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms, if that were not so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

What a hope! What an eternal promise.

Every now and then you hear incredible survival stories that seem to stretch the boundaries of what any human being should be able to endure. I heard a story like that recently and I'd like to tell you just a little bit about this amazing woman. Her name is Emmaly Reed. When Emmaly was three years old she and her family were arrested and taken to one of Hitler's concentration camps. She would spend the next 12 years in camps and experimental hospitals.

But God had a divine plan and place even in that most evil darkness. Emmaly found a relationship with Christ through those she met in the camps. As a Jew, she was housed in the Jewish barracks. But every night she snuck out to the Christians' barracks and they would provide her with whatever food they had left over, maybe a baked potato or a piece of tomato.

Her time, she said, she resorted simply to eating flowers and grass.

When the camp was liberated, the guards fled but they left all the survivors hanging on the walls of buildings by chains around their necks. If they moved at all they would choke themselves to death. When they were eventually found, only about 25 percent of those who were left on the walls were still alive. Emmaly was one of them but she was unconscious and in a coma.

When she was freed from the camp at age 15, she weighed 32 pounds. As she looks back today at the holocaust, she says that her relationship with Christ is what has helped her learn to forgive the Nazis who did this to the Jews. She has said, "You can only overcome if you forgive."

Bibles were strictly forbidden in the camps. Those who were caught smuggling them in were put to death. However according to Emmaly many of the Christians she met had a thorough knowledge of the book tucked deep inside their hearts. She says, "The Christian people taught me how to pray, how to believe in God, how to have hope. I learned how to pray and it gave me great peace."

Well, she is in her 80's now. She lives a very simple life sharing her story with local schools and churches and she lives in a way that transcends her very meager surroundings. She will tell you, "Yep! Life has always been hard for me. My health, not so good. Men have not treated me well. I'm estranged from my children because I'm a Christian. But it is okay. I'm going to be with Jesus soon."

Wow! "I'm going to be with Jesus soon." I'm amazed when I see that despite everything this woman has lived through she owns this as her testimony: "I'm going to be with Jesus soon." For Emmaly, that stands alone as the day that will be the best day of her life.

Think about that for a moment. Imagine the best day of your life. What would that be? Was it your wedding day? Maybe it was the news you were expecting a child or that very first moment when you held that little lamb in your arms. Perhaps you've worked long and hard for that certain job promotion and finally your extra efforts paid off.

But honestly, even in the best days of our lives, there's always a little something missing. Why is that do you think? I think some of that might be answered in Ecclesiastes 3:11 which says, speaking of God: He has planted eternity in the human heart. God has set eternity in our hearts. The longings that we experience here on earth will never be totally satisfied until we see Jesus face to face.

So there is no better promise than this one found in John 14:2: "My Father's house has many rooms, if that were not so, would I have told you I'm going to there to prepare a place for you?"

C.S. Lewis talks of this pull for something more as evidence that God exists. When he was just a little boy he said he longed for beauty, for holiness, and the eternal for something beyond earthly satisfactions. But as he grew, he became an atheist and all those impulses he dismissed as imaginary. But then he asked himself, could I have even a longing for something that doesn't exist? For Lewis, this was evidence that something greater, better, more than what he was created for, there is something more than what we see on this earth. Something was pulling at him that was eternal and only the eternal could satisfy.

There are some families like Emmaly's who seem to have endured more hardships than what seems fair. All of us know, there will be hard things in life. But then you look around and you see some suffer far more than most. It's hard not to question, why Lord? For those who have suffered more than their share, perhaps that's you at this moment. The promise, "I've gone to prepare a place for you" is filled with hope. There are some things in this life that we don't have an answer for on this side of eternity.

Some of Christ's promises don't always make sense in the light of what we're experiencing right now. Many moments in life feel unredeemed. Ask any parent who has buried a child or one who has watched a loved one suffer greatly and then die of cancer. Ask them if it seems to them that good has come out of it.

Now I'm not for a second saying that God's promises are not 100% trustworthy. We can stake our lives on them. What I am saying is that some questions might only be resolved when we get home. Some wounds are hard to heal this side of eternity.

I think of my darling friends Todd and Angie Smith and the story Angie shares in her book, *I Will Carry You*. You probably know Todd as one of the vocalists from the group Selah. But if you've ever watched him worship or listen to Angie teach, you might not know how much -- how much they've suffered. In one of her pregnancies when Angie went for her ultrasound at 20 weeks she was told that the little girl she was carrying would not be able to survive outside the womb. They did in fact have two and a half hours with Audrey before she went home.

Any of you who have lost a child know pain and the depth of grief that no one else can understand. It is only when you're finally in the presence of Christ and reunited with that little one that the gaping wound in your soul will be healed and whole. I've watched in silent awe as women like Angie and others have learned to walk with this wound in a way that brings such glory to Christ.

If there was one woman in scripture for whom the message that Jesus has gone to prepare a place would be so important, who do you think that would be? I find myself drawn back again to the

teenage girl who actually gave birth to the Messiah. What would this promise mean to Mary? What would it mean to her as she stood at the foot of the cross? Everything within her must have wanted to fall to the dry ground that was absorbing the blood of her beloved son. But she stood beside John and watched as Christ struggled to breathe. How she longed to hold him one more time as she had done when he was just a little boy, running home with scraped knees. She must have wanted to touch his face and wipe the blood that was crusting in his eyes in the merciless heat of that day. She looked at his hands, now cruelly nailed to wood and remembered how he had learned to feel of wood and nails from his father to hold together, not to tear apart -- to create beauty, not destroy it.

To one side the soldiers gambled for the seamless garment she had made for him. They had considered tearing into pieces and sharing. For some reason, they did not. "Father, forgive them for they not know what they do." His voice was raspy and dry but she heard every word. Even in this caldron of pain they had not changed him. They could nail his wrist to a tree but they could not nail their bitterness into his heart, no matter what they did to him. She wondered if they even heard his words, "They know not what they do."

He spoke again. This time he was speaking to just one man; to one who was being executed beside him, "Truly I say to you today you will be with me in paradise." The criminal being executed beside her son had mocked and cried out with the rest of the crowd until he heard those first words. Forgive them? Forgive them? That such a thing was still possible in this broken and barbaric place was stunning -- impossible! She watched the man struggle and twist his body to look at her son's eyes and he saw what she knew, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In these last moments on this earth this wretched soul found freedom.

I wonder if Mary wondered if the man's mother was in the crowd that day. He'd been a little boy once too. He'd sat in his mother's lap and told her everything he was going to do when he grew up. This barbaric end had never been part of that dream. Had this mother watched through the years as their dreams turned into nightmares? I imagine Mary hoped that if she was there she'd witnessed this exchange of death and despair for life and freedom.

Jesus spoke again and this time it was to her, "Woman, behold your son." Then to John his dearest friend, "Behold your mother." How could one woman's heart contain this much pain without tearing apart? I wonder for the first time if she was glad that her husband Joseph was no longer here on this earth to watch his boy, broken and bruised -- would have been too much, too much for a father to bear. She felt the warmth of John the beloved disciples arm wrap around her shoulders.

Jesus spoke again, "I thirst." What a bitter irony. She recalled his invitation that had wreaked havoc in the temple that day. Remember? On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus

stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink." She watched as one of the soldiers dipped a sponge into the wine and held it to his lips.

The pungent smell of the wine that carried in the breeze must have reached Mary. I wonder if in that moment she was back in Cana when everything began. Remember his first miracle, turning water into wine? She'd asked him to intervene. His gaze had penetrated the pondering places in her heart when he asked her, "What does this have to do with me?" He said that day his hour had not yet come. Did Mary agonize over the thought that perhaps she had hurried her son to this slaughter house?

He spoke just once more, three words: "It is finished." As he bowed his head Mary knew he was gone. As Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus lowered Christ's bruised and battered body on to a clean white sheet, did Mary think back to the night he was born and they wrapped him tight to keep him warm? Mary saw the beginning and an end. Started one night far away from home as she gave birth in a place that offered little of the shelter a mother would want for a newborn baby. The canopy that night was heaven-sent as angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to men on whom his favor rests."

As Christ grew into manhood and began his ministry, his life was a divine show and tell of the heart of God but nobody understood. Some saw him as a warrior. They wanted revenge against those who had oppressed them. Some saw him only as a miracle worker because they wanted life to be fixed and to make sense and they wanted it now. Some saw him as a man who spoke truth in a world of half-truth. But no one saw that he is truth. With every act of love and kindness, every word of rebuke that cut through religious cloth, Jesus was laying the foundation that would lead the way to one radical statement that would change the world forever. When the the final drop of blood fell from the cross onto the earth beneath, Jesus cried out, "It is finished."

One day you and I will join Emmaly Reed and worship at the feet of Christ. Todd and Angie Smith will be there with their five children. As well as every man, woman, and child who has put their trust and faith in Jesus. There are many things in this life I don't know. But I know this. When you and I finally see Jesus it will be worth it all.

We left Mary at the foot of the cross but that's not where she stayed. No, she was looking even at the end -- looking for Jesus. I wonder who got to tell Mary first that Jesus was alive. I wonder if it might have been John. I imagine him running as fast as he could and throwing his arms around her fragile shoulders and telling her, "He's alive! Jesus is alive!" As she wiped the tears from her cheek, she knew that she would see her son again. But this time he would be her savior and this time he would be the one to wipe the tears from her eyes.

I don't know what losses you've had in your life but let me share with you a verse from a song

that Todd and Selah wrote after Audrey's death: We live in the shadow of the fall but the cross says these are all places where grace is soon to be so amazing. They may be unfulfilled, they may be unrestored but when something that shattered is laid before the Lord, just watch and see, it will not be unredeemed.

That's a promise. And God is not man that he should lie. I think as we stake our hope in what we know, we know he's gone to prepare a place for us. But my heart turns right now to some people who have some very desperate needs. Before people can hear the words of life, sometimes they need the water of life. Would you watch this with me? And then I'll tell you a little bit more about what you and I can do.

On the mission field

Ralph: Imagine living in a village where everybody is hot, everybody is thirsty, where people are dying on a regular basis all because of the water. Is this a water source for the village, Urma?

>> Yes, that's the water source of the village.

Ralph: They drink that?

>> Yeah, they do!

Ralph: Wow! What do you see in this cup? What we don't see is what should really alarm us; just all types of germs and diseases are in this one little cup of water. We have heard countless stories already of how many people have lost children from drinking this water.

Announcer: Whenever the *LIFE* mission team visits a rural village around the world, one of the first questions they ask is if any children have died from a waterborne illness. Unfortunately, the answer is almost always yes. In fact, many mothers are still grieving from a recent death where they share losing several of their children from drinking diseased water. Can you imagine how a mother feels when she has no other choice but to give her children dirty water to drink?

Open caption:

>> I'm very afraid my other children will also die because even when I'm sitting here I feel like my heart is not at peace because my kids can die at any time.

Announcer: Now imagine how a mother would feel when she sees a *LIFE Outreach* drilling rig enter her village and how her hope would be restored as she watches the assembly of a new pump that will deliver clean, life-giving water to her children.

[Laughter]

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Something as simple as water! You and I take it for granted. You turn the faucet on and there's water. Or sometimes we want nicer water so we buy different bottled waters and we get all fancy about what kind of water we have.

I've had the privilege and the huge responsibility of seeing what it looks like when that's not available. I remember walking with a mom and her two children down to one of those places where Ralph was, where literally this was the only source of water for the entire village. While I was watching this mum gather the water in a bucket, there were pigs and other animals in the same water. It's not just that there's dirt there, there's disease in the water. But it is like a "Sophie's Choice," the mothers have no choice. They either give their children no water -- and to die from thirst is an agonizing death -- or give their children water knowing there's a good chance that it will make them very sick.

But what a joy it is. So many of you have helped us do this in the past. When you see a water well go in and it brings life to the whole village, the amazing thing about these pumps is they will last for like 70 years. So it literally is water for life, for the entire life of a family in the village. It is so doable.

If you and I would join together today and say listen. There is so much that we have in this world that we kind of take for granted but for \$48 you can provide clean water for ten people. For \$144, you can provide clean water for 30 people. And for \$4800, you can provide water for 1,000 people. That will put an entire drilling rig into a village.

If you can give an additional \$100, it will give three families the *LIFE Filter Kit*. The last time I was in a certain part of Africa there was some areas that we couldn't get to. Our people said, "Listen. It's too hard to get a drilling rig in there." So they came up with this brilliant thing of these filter kits and for \$100 we can provide water for three families. To see the difference, when you hold out the water that is filthy and full of disease and then you see either coming from the clean well or you see it coming from the filter kit and it is crystal clear, and to put such joy on the faces of mothers.

I only have one son. I cannot imagine what it is like to lose a child simply because something that you as his mom put into his or her hands. One of these women I talked to said, "I can't sleep at night. I lay there and honestly," she said, "I wish if there was a physical stairway up to heaven,

I would just want to go right now and join the two children that I've already lost."

They have such despair and we have been given so much. But we can only do it if we join together. There's something we're so committed to. We want to build 400 new water wells and we can do it if you will join with us. Again, just \$48, clean water for ten people. \$144 for 30 people.

So would you go to your phone? If the phone's busy would you keep dialing? It's the difference between life and death. Thank you!

Begin video clip

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

The good news is there is a solution. **Mission:** Water for Life is one of the most proven and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything!

With your gift today you can help drill 400 water wells in remote villages in 15 nations. A gift of \$48 will provide disease-free water for ten people, \$72 will provide for 15 people, and \$144 will help provide clean water straight from the ground for 30 people.

Please also consider an additional gift of \$100 to help provide three families with water filtration kits in emergency areas where our drilling rigs are unable to reach. As our thank you, we'll send you the books, *Words of Jesus* and *Words of Healing*. One contains only the words of Jesus and the other scriptures for healing in your body, mind, and soul. With your \$100 gift you can receive both hardbound and softbound editions of these scripture promise books.

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 hand sculpted "Determined Eagle" bronze. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

On the mission field

Sheila: I put my hand in this water and in a couple of inches it disappears. This water is -- gosh! It's absolutely filthy! That's why there is such -- this is not something that we can wait for another week or another month. This is all they have today. This is all this mom and these

two girls and all these villagers and hundreds of villages around Africa are like. They need clean water. And one well, one water well will last a whole lifetime and it will change their life.

So many of these children die because of waterborne diseases. You just have to look at it. Honestly, I wouldn't let my dogs drink out of this. This is horrible! But we can make a difference. Would you go to your phone right now and just do whatever you can? Can you imagine if this is all you had to give to your children? I can't imagine that.

So go to your phone, call that number on your screen, go online, give the best gift, just whatever you have. If you've got a lot, give a lot. If you've got a little, give what you can. But whatever you give will bring water for life for these families.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much! Together, we're really changing the world one child, one life at a time. It literally is water for life.

For any gift we'll be glad to send you these books, *The Words of Jesus*. But if you can send \$100 to give filters for three families, we're going to send you these beautiful hardbound books, *Words of Healing*, *Words of Life*. We'll send you the paperback ones too so you can give those to a friend. So even as you are giving life and hope to families overseas, you can share some life and hope with some of your friends and neighbors.

What a joy -- what a privilege it is to be the body of Christ on the earth at this time. That privilege brings responsibility and you and I can change the world.

I'm Sheila Walsh. Thank you so much for being with me in *Wednesdays in the Word*.