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Week ten: WFL Last Week

Sheila Walsh

"Peace"

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. One of the things I felt would be kind of fun, I love the fact that some of you will leave comments on my Facebook page or on *LIFE Today's* Facebook page and talk about things we've talked about on the show. But one of the things I'd love to know from you are what are some of the things that you would like us to look at?

I'm thinking of kind of doing a bit of a study, kind of going into some of the most basics of our faith. We're given so many commands in the Word of God but I want to unpack well, how do we do that? If there is something that you're struggling with and you think, I sure wish you would address that, let us know and I'd love -- I would love to do that and we can look at it together.

But today, I want us to look at something that is a promise of Christ. But honestly, and maybe particularly in the days we're living in, I think many of us find it very, very difficult and that is the word *peace*. I've even got it on my little mats here: Peace.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word *peace*? Maybe if you've got little children you hear yourself saying, "I just want five minutes of peace!" I used to laugh if ever I was watching a beauty pageant and that would always somehow make its way in there. "I would like a new car, a career in movies, and world peace."

Well, obviously, for us, I wanted to dive deep and say what does God's word say about peace? Because I love to get to share my heart and my stories with you but basically, everything that I want to share with you, if it is not based in the Word of God, then we're

not going to go there. So let's look at a few verses and then we'll dive into what that looks like.

Psalm 119, verse 165 says this: Great peace have those who love your law and nothing can make them stumble.

That's quite a declaration. Great peace have those who love your law and nothing can make them stumble. It makes me think. We have to make a fresh commitment in this year to really dive in deep into the Word of God. Sometimes I'll get letters from people saying, "What does God think about this?" And "What does God say about that?" And even though I'm happy to share my own thoughts, I always direct people back to what does God's word say?

I don't know if you have a daily routine for reading the Word of God, if you don't, I highly recommend, I don't go anywhere without my Bible. And when I feel stuck, then that's where I turn. But there are so many verses about peace. When Christ was promised, in Isaiah we read this: For to us a child is born. To us a son is given. And the government will be on his shoulders and he will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

And the angels went on to say, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Jesus talked a lot in his final conversation with his very closest friends about peace. I can't imagine what it must have been like to be those who have walked with Jesus for three years. Think about it, they've seen things no one has seen before. They've seen someone being brought back from the dead. They've seen a young boy bringing one little lunch and suddenly it fills a multitude of people.

But Jesus knows what they don't know. You see, they're expecting Messiah as they

understand him from Old Testament scriptures. They expect that one of these days Jesus is going to ride into Jerusalem and take over and defeat the Roman government. But Jesus tries to prepare them for the fact that yeah, I know you love me as the master but you don't always understand the master plan.

And so in that final conversation in John's gospel, Jesus talks about peace in three different places. He says, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world."

When Jesus was about to be betrayed and executed he was trying to prepare his closest friends. John 16:33 says this: I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.

Now if you think about it, what Jesus told them was really hard stuff. He told them a time was coming when even those who come supposedly in the name of God would turn against them. If you actually read John 14, 15, 16 it's not the kind of speech that you would normally deliver if you're trying to instill peace in the heart of the listener. Which makes me think that the peace Christ offers you and me right now no matter what you're facing is different than anything that we can experience anywhere else.

You might be in a situation right now where you think, Sheila, you don't know the circumstances I'm in. You don't know what's happening within the walls of my own home. You don't know what's happening in my finances. You don't know what's happening in my health. And I agree with you, I don't. But here's what I do know. I believe this as deep as the marrow in my bones, peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of Christ. Jesus said in this world you will have trouble but what he promised was his presence.

After the crucifixion as his disciples were cowered together, remember, in fear, Christ appeared with a very same word on his lips. We read: On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked, for fear of the Jewish

leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

In the midst of chaos outside their doors, and a heartache inside their hearts, Christ spoke, "Peace!" Why don't you just let that word rest on you? We live in a noisy world. We live in a world where we're being told all the time that things are falling apart. Christ has not moved from where he is. God is on the throne. He is in control.

I love when Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give you to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

That Greek word that's used for troubled is the word *eteraxen* and it means stirred up like a storm. Do not let your hearts be stirred up like a storm.

So Jesus is saying to you and to me, you're going to find yourself in the midst of some terrible storms where you're tempted to say -- and maybe you're there right now -- I'm not going to make it out of this one. And Jesus says, "My peace I leave with you."

That very same word *eteraxen* is used when Jesus says, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I've overcome the world." "In this world you will face storms but take heart, I have overcome the world!"

I remember a long time ago when I was actually a student in London and I met a man in a park. It was a beautiful sunny day and I was sitting there with some of my books; I was studying for an exam. And I saw this gentleman sitting across from me and I could kind of tell by the way he was dressed that he was probably homeless. He seemed to have everything that he owned in a couple of plastic bags by his feet. And I wondered if he was hungry. We made eye contact a couple of times and I smiled at him and he looked away.

So I actually went over to him. I felt that prompting of the Holy Spirit. You know I don't know if you're learning to tune into that. It is one of my real commitments in this year to

really pay attention to those gentle nudges of the Holy Spirit because as far as I'm concerned, I might have this privilege of doing this two or three days a week or I'm out on the weekends speaking but as a believer, I'm on mission 24/7. I'm not my own. I've been bought by a price. So that's my commitment this year, Lord, help me to see people.

So on that particular day I felt this nudge from the Holy Spirit. So I went over to him and I said, "Sir, I wondered if you'd like to share my lunch?"

He said, "I would love that actually."

So I gave him half my sandwich and I poured half my diet coke into a cup and I kept the can. We sat for a while just kind of talking about people in the park and nothing too much. I told him a little bit of my story, that I wanted to be a missionary in India. I didn't push him but then he began to tell me a little of his story. He told me that he had become an alcoholic. And because of this terrible disease he had lost his marriage, he had lost his children, he had lost his license, he had lost his whole practice, he had lost his home. And this man who had been a tremendously successful doctor now found himself living rough in the streets.

He told me, he said, "One day I was walking along a street in London and I saw an old man in the window in a dirty shirt and unkempt hair. And as my distaste for him rose, I realized that this was me. This is what I had become."

I wonder if you've ever had a moment, not as drastic as that, but when you look at your life today and you look at how you thought your life would turn out and you think, how did I get here? This is not the way I thought my life would look.

Well, there is a passage in Mark's gospel that speaks to all the storms that you and I will ever face in life. Mark's gospel tells two stories back-to-back. And what they show is when Jesus speaks to storms outside our life and when Jesus speaks to storms inside our life, both have to obey.

First we read in Mark Chapter 4: As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake."

So they took Jesus in the boat and started out leaving the crowds behind although other boats followed. But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion.

The disciples woke him up saying, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"

When Jesus woke up he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!"

Suddenly, the wind stopped and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" They asked each other. "Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

I don't know if you've ever been to Israel but mountains surround Galilee and violent storms often blow up. This storm was so intense, so violent that the waves were crashing over the side of the boat. Now this was something different because the disciples were used to this but they were alarmed. When they looked for Jesus he was asleep.

I'm sure of a couple of things. He was probably exhausted; he spent the day teaching, but he was not afraid. He had total confidence in God. It's not that he was unaware of the storm, he was simply not afraid. Storms never took Christ by surprise, and will never take him by surprise in your life. In this world, you will have eteraxen, you will have storms. But take heart, "I have overcome the world."

I think it is interesting that it is after Christ has spoken to the storm that we read that they

were afraid, "Who is this man?"

Well, they are carry on through the night crossing to the other side of the lake and we're about to see that when Christ speaks to storms outside, as we saw with that storm, but now, when Christ speaks to storms inside the human heart, both have to obey.

Well, another man, horrified by what he had become is who we are going to meet. We read his story, carries on from the end of Mark four into Mark five. This is what we read: So they arrived at the other side of the lake in the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from the tombs to meet him. The man lived in the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. Whenever he was put into chains and shackles -- as he often was -- he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones.

When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him and bowed low before him. With a shriek, he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don't torture me!"

For Jesus had already said to the spirit, "Come out of the man you evil spirit." Then Jesus demanded, "What is your name?"

And he replied, "My name is legion, because there are many of us inside this man."

What I think is so interesting, this area is on the eastern shore. It is not a place that any Jew would ever go. It was a place of pagan cult worship. It was the first time Jesus had ever set foot on that place. They sacrificed pigs to their gods and animals that would be unclean to the Jews. Landing at the edge of the tomb of the dead where this mad man would live was a nightmare for the disciples.

But here's what I think is so interesting. This man who has been tormented for so many years, he does not know who Jesus is. So why is it that the minute Jesus sets his foot on the shore that this man runs? And when it says he fell at his feet, it is not like a stumbling, it's what would mean to fall in worship.

I have to believe that it's because even though the man didn't know who Jesus was, the demons certainly did and for the first time in this man's life he felt the evil that had inhabited him back away. So he ran and he fell at the feet of Jesus.

Now I imagine whatever you're facing today is not as drastic as that. But here's what I want you to know. In those two stories back to back, we see that sometimes the storms that we're going through are outside of our life. Maybe you're worried about a loved one or you're worried about your finances or you're worried about a job. Perhaps you're looking for work and you think, I don't know what's going to happen. Can you know peace right now? Absolutely! Peace is not the absence of trouble or eteraxen, it is not the absence of storms, it is the presence of Christ. But perhaps, like that man, perhaps the storms are inside you. Perhaps you're dealing with anxiety, with fear, with all sorts of things that sometimes it's hard to talk about because we think as a believer I'm not supposed to feel this way.

Can I just say, "The peace of Christ be with you?" Even in the midst of the worst internal storm you can know the peace of our Lord Jesus. Where is it found? It is found at his feet. And just like that man who got up and then wanted to follow Jesus and do something, you and I now have the privilege of getting up and doing something in Jesus' name. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Open Captions

>> This is where I found my son dead. He was in this bed, and I knew it was because of

unclean water.

Announcer: Vanarundai's family will never be the same. While all of her children constantly battle illness transmitted through their only water source, her youngest, a two-year old was simply too weak to fight any longer. Despite his tender age and tiny size, the void he leaves behind feels immeasurable.

Open Captions:

>> What I miss most about my son is how much he liked to play. He was always near me, calling me, "Mama." He played with his brothers and sisters. He was the joy of our family. I loved him so much.

Announcer: Like so many areas in Burundi, there is no access to clean drinking water for this community. The closest safe source is too far away and very costly so the village must rely solely on the Empanda River, water they must share with livestock and also use for bathing and cleaning. Even medical help is largely ineffective because the only available water remains tainted. The danger is unrelenting and Vanarandai is helpless to stop it.

Open Captions:

>> It is very hard for me to keep giving this unclean water to my children, but I have no choice. I keep asking God to bring us people who can save us. And give us clean water.

Announcer: Vanarandai and so many other mothers like her are praying for a miracle. It's the only hope they have for the future of their children. And you can help make it possible.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: I cannot even imagine that, as a mom, not being able to give your child something as basic as a glass of clean water. I've watched *LIFE Today* for years, have loved *LIFE Today*, supported *LIFE Today* for years but I'll never forget that first trip where I got to go and see what it is like for these moms in those villages, so remote. They have no other choice. We would have to drive for hours and hours to get to where their villages were. And then I would ask for the privilege, "Can I come with you in the morning when you go to get water for your children?" And watch these women with no shoes on their feet walk for a long, long way to get to a place that was absolutely filthy!

I would think, is this all you have? And literally, they have no choice. That's the only water available. So they either give their children this dirty water and pray and pray that this child will not get sick like their last child did.

I can't imagine when I think of my own son, Christian when he was two; it was one of my favorite stages. He was just into everything; running around and doing everything. And the thought that you could come home and look at your child in bed and realize that your child has died simply because the water that you gave your child is so full of diseases.

And then I listen to her prayer asking God that God would send someone. That's why you and I are here. This is our watch. It is no accident that you and I are on the planet at this moment. This is our last week. We've committed to put 200 new water wells into 15 different countries where the need is huge! And we could all do something.

Please! I know it is easy just to say, "Oh well, I'll let somebody else do it." But why don't we all do it? Do you realize that for \$48, now that's not much, you provide clean water for ten people? \$144, which is doable for some, you'll provide clean water for 30 people. Now if God has blessed you, blessed your business, you might be able to give \$4800. Do you know that will put one of the 200 water wells into a village and provide Water for LIFE? That will give water to a thousand people and it lasts for 70 years.

So please, let's be the answer to her prayer. Will you go to your phone? Will you dial

that number on your screen? Would you make the best gift possible? Go online. But if every single one of us hears the Lord saying, "I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink." So please, would you do it today? It is our last week. We've made a commitment to these people. We will not let you down. We will not let you have to bury one more of your children because we didn't come through for you. So please, go to your phone. Just make the best gift you can. Thank you so much!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Today, a mother living in extreme poverty will do the unthinkable -- give her children dirty, diseased-filled water that she knows could kill them. With no other choice what's a mother to do?

With your help, clean water is on the way. Mission Water for LIFE provides a way for parents to save the lives of their children, to offer them a bright future free from the fear of death. With your gift today, you can help drill and establish the first 200 water wells of the year. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children, a gift of \$48 will help provide for 10, \$72 will provide for 15, and \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With your gift, we'll send you the *Praying Grace* 55-day devotional. This new devotional will help you renew your mind to the realities of God's grace and help you pray powerful grace-based prayers for each day.

With your gift of \$100 or more, request the "Praying Grace" tumbler. This reusable 16-ounce container is constructed with insulated stainless steel, perfect for hot or cold beverages.

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 the beautiful, new

commemorative bronze sculpture, "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms."

This is the last week. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of clip

On the mission field

James: This mother has four children. Last summer a year ago, they had an outbreak of intestinal disease from contaminated water. Two of her children got very, very sick.

Now she's got a little baby just a few months old and this baby is living on her mother's milk, this baby is nursing. Betty, pretty soon this little baby is going to be drinking that water and oftentimes it takes their lives.

Betty: It really does, James. And they can't do anything about it because it's all the water they have. I can't even imagine! This little baby is so precious, so beautiful! And her mama is just cuddling her and taking care of her. And she makes little sounds of life. But you know? I don't know how long those little sounds of life will be if we don't do something to help them. We can make the difference by doing the water wells and giving them a fresh cup of water.

James: You know, I very deliberately reached out to see if this little girl would take hold of my fingers and in so many ways, little children like this are reaching out to find somebody they can hold onto.

And I would like you to be one of the hands to reach out and dial the telephone number, and take your bank card and use it like a check or write a check and make it to *LIFE*.

Please call us and let us know what you're sending or you can go online and say I want to give life to children like this to keep them healthy.

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Thank you so much. For any gift at all, we'll send you this lovely book, *Praying Grace*. And for a gift of \$100 or more, we'll send you this very, very cool water bottle, I'm *Praying Grace* with a wonderful scripture on it. I know you don't do it for that but it's just our way of saying thank you.

Thank you so much. If you tried to get through and the lines are busy, please keep calling. This is the last week. The need is urgent. We go to our faucets and we turn it on and we take it for granted. There are mothers praying right now that we will respond in Jesus' name.

So thanks for being with us. For *LIFE Today*, I'm Sheila Walsh. God bless you. See you next time.