

9/11/19

Week 37

Sheila Walsh

Paul de Jong #2

Sheila: I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm so glad you joined us. I'm particularly glad because today I have a very special guest all the way from "down under," from New Zealand. Pastor Paul de Jong is with me again today. I just want to say thank you. Thanks for being here.

Paul: It is an honor to be here, to be with you, and great friends, and just to hear what God is doing here right across America. It's amazing.

Sheila: Yeah! God's really doing some amazing things. But this other book that I wanted to talk to you about today, I love the message of this book. It is called, *Failure Freedom*. When you first hear that you think, oh does that mean I'm going to be free from failing? But that's not really the message of your book, is it?

Paul: It's a bit of play on words. Again, my life has always been in the church. My parents found Christ when I was very, very young. Again, positive church, great God-believing, very God-centered; I don't think I ever heard a message that failure was part of the journey. And so to put failure and sin in the same sentence is incorrect because failure is not a sin. Sin may be a failure but I think personally, I look back, I've been fully committed to the things of God almost 40 years in full time ministry, I think I lost about five to ten years along the way of what I could have done had I understood that failure was a part of the process.

Sheila: You tell this great story about the first time you preached. You're preaching and

you prepare this message. Tell us about that. I thought it was hilarious.

Paul: Well, I think for all of us, we do things because of expectation and we try too hard. One of the first messages I ever preached it was kind of in Bible College, I'd never done it before and we went on an outstation and I preached. I think I was there to preach for 35 minutes. I looked at the clock. It was all over at 9 minutes 30, filled with a whole lot of mature people, and I was red, I was perspiring. I didn't know what to do. So I just said, "Let's pray!" Walked out...

Sheila: A long prayer?

Paul: It wasn't as long as it needed to be. But walked out of the church and some dear elderly Christians came up to me, "Thank you for a great message." I'm thinking, you're lying! And then I had my best friend who said, "By the way, good job! But I noted you said 'you know' 35 times. Here's the list." So from feeling like that I felt like that. And you know what I said to myself? I never want to preach again.

Sheila: Wow! That's one of the interesting things about failure because I can think of times in my own life where I thought, well, I'm not going to try that again. But really, that's not the way we should respond to failure, is it?

Paul: No, I think we've got a twisted view on failure. It's like well, if God is really in it, we won't fail. Or if we take this next step God is going to meet us every part of journey. So failure is not a part. Whereas I've come to discover, let's take Peter in the boat. Peter's in the boat with the other 11 and Jesus comes and being Peter he says, "Bid me to come." He comes. He sinks. Our whole premise is like he failed. Did he fail? Or did he learn something that could only be taught by taking a step into something he had never done before? Then we say, Jesus said, "Oh you of little faith." Well, maybe he said, "At least you've got the beginnings of faith."

Sheila: Yeah! He stepped out of the boat. The other 11 were still in there.

Paul: And there's always people in the stands saying, "I knew you would fail." Whereas I turn that around and go, "I knew that too." Because how can you take a step into something that you've never done before and not fail?

So little child, we had the video cameras out, we have the iPhone's today, I suppose. Their first step they fall over. They bang their knees and yet we go, "Well done! You took a step." Whereas as we grow older, it is like, I don't want to fail. I don't want to fail.

Whereas I would teach and in the book I say failure is a human certainty. If you're still a human and you are committed to taking ground, to taking new significant steps you must commit to failing. Even in science; science doesn't turn something that doesn't work a failure. They teach it as a lesson. So I learned something for that.

So I think in our Christian walk, often we're putting failure and sin in the same context. Whereas we've got to remove the sin thought and realize, no, if we haven't been there, the first time we walk on water, we will fail. By the way, God didn't give us web feet. It is not a natural thing to walk on water. There was something to be learned. So he learned, I've got to keep my eyes more on Jesus when I take a step of faith.

Sheila: I think sometimes we confuse God's love with if we feel like we've done well then we think God loves us more. If we think we've done badly, then we think God loves us less. That's a very kind of twisted way of looking at the love of God.

Paul: Again, One Corinthians 13, we often use this in a marriage kind of service: Now abide faith, hope, and love. Let's just stop there for a moment. Now abide love. Love is completely unconditional. It's the foundation of everything we do. It is the bottom line. Faith is what unlocks the supernatural. We know that. Between the two is what I call the umbilical cord, which is hope. I can't ever earn God's love. It is there. Faith comes from him through his word. Hope is the area the enemy attacks us.

So therefore when we fail in our human existence, the enemy knows that's the only ground he can't smite -- at love. Love from our Father will never change no matter how far we've drifted, no matter how much we've stuffed up, he loves us. And faith unlocks the supernatural future but hope. When we fail, we've got to look at failure different and say, "No, I'm going to utilize that failure to teach me."

Failure only exists in the present tense. And yet we keep looking at the things that we have failed in the past and they too often rule us, rob our hope so we can't link that supernatural outcome to the love of God.

Sheila: I wonder how many of us at times almost have moved ourselves to the place of a spectator in life. Because you've tried something once and you fail and you've failed so then you just hold yourself back. Do you see that happening a lot?

Paul: It's happened in my life. So we stop because we weren't taught a theology of failure.

Sheila: Why is that though? Why do you think we've not been taught?

Paul: Let me say some of the outcomes. I think the outcomes is that often in the church we're not being real. So we have somebody up in the front and I say this to our church, if you're wanting a perfect pastor, you don't have that. You're going to have a real pastor that's going to talk about the process, not just the expected outcome. We've listened to too many people that have parked in the stands and haven't got on the field. If you get onto the field, you will fail. And yet, as you learn from that failure, somebody said, "Failure is only failure if you don't make the attempt."

So I think that's true. I think we've got to begin to look at it and say no, we're not going to allow the people in the stands who have parked to dictate the pathway of significance.

I think we give up because we don't understand what it takes. Again, one of the first times

I was in America I went to a baseball game and they had the batters and they had the point average of base percentage of getting onto base. I was naive. I said, "What's that .375?" "Oh! That's one of the great batters! One of the champions." I said, "But what does it mean?" "That means they get onto base 375 times out of 1,000 attempts."

So just park there for a moment. So this person will be earning millions, yes? But they get it right one in three. Whereas in the Christian church it's like if God is on you, you get it right one and one. That's not true. How can you get it right if you haven't been there before? So we often park because we've got a wrong view of failure.

I've realized, if I want to live a significant life I must commit to failing more often and learning from those failings.

Sheila: Where does the grace of God come in to help us? Because I think of so many people who I have letters on my desk at the moment that I'm waiting to get back with who just feel like they have failed one too many times. How do you come back to God when you fail one more time?

Paul: You can't fail one too many times if God is infinite in grace and love. There's not a register that he takes. It is like that's why we live under the shadow of Calvary. If we have failed and that failure was sin, there is forgiveness. The cross is not limited. Then if we fail in just trying to achieve things it's not sin but we failed in that attempt, we get up and we learn what can we take from that? Because the moment we allow the despondency of lack of right failure and understanding we will spiral down and get seized in the moment.

One of the things I write in the book is that failure has a need to be defined and then confined. So therefore I've had to learn, okay, I'm not going to hide from the failure, that failure took place. Okay, I accept that. But now I'm going to confine it to my past. I've got to put it back there. If it is a sin issue, I've got to repent, get that right before God. It doesn't matter how many times I come back, I'm free in Calvary.

If it is something that I did that is not sin, but I should have known better, I'm going to confine and define it. So therefore it is going to be a stepping stone into more knowledge than I had before that. So in business, God called me to business, God called me to do this and it is all falling apart. What are you learning from it? See it is a lesson. Then get the right kind of people, because if you have people around you that don't understand failure is part of the journey, they'll just tell you to give up. Others are going to say no that will become yours. Your greatest strength in the future is the weakness you possess today if you process it.

Sheila: Because you talk about that in the book. You see that in the life of Peter. You contrast actually Peter, Thomas, and Judas. How God redeems failure. So failure given into the hands of God we'll become more of who we're supposed to be?

Paul: We're stronger. Somebody that's never failed is somebody that's never grown. You can't step into a new tomorrow without lessons to be learned. You can't step into marriage without having to learn lessons. You can't raise children without learning lessons. You can't build a business, pioneer a ministry unless you're prepared to go... I would say to our team now, "If we sit here for three months and debrief something and every time you're saying, 'no problem.'" I go, "You're not stretching far enough."

If I was a coach of an Olympian champion, I would teach them how to live beyond their gift capacity into the failure zone because that's what happens. You can do that, fantastic! That's your time. I'm going to take you to a breaking point so you know where your breaking point is but you'll understand there is a margin of what you thought you could be and what you can be. That's where the medal is won.

And it's the same in the Christian life. God is not looking for a perfect person. God is looking for somebody that will stretch in belief and grow in the process.

Sheila: That should not be but that almost sounds revolutionary to me. I absolutely believe you're right, but I think so often within our church communities that is not the

message that we get.

Paul: Not with our own insecurities. I've been through that. You get up and you have to be pastor, you have to have all the answers. Where now I go, no, I don't. I'm just going to get up. If we're called to do it, we better be secure that we're not perfect. And so I think by setting an example that none of us arrive, but God's grace meets us there and brings us forward enables everybody to breathe again and say, if it seems too good to be true it is too good to be true. We're all human. We are human. His grace meets us.

And as I said, and as you brought up, God says his strength is made what? Perfect in weakness. So it is not a removal of weakness, it is an acknowledgement of weakness. Once I acknowledge my weakness, then God begins to say, well, then the enemy can't put this chain or this prison around you. You can see if for what it was but you're going to build one of the lessons we learn from it. Say to the team, "I want you to fail. Where it comes undone is when you continue to fail at the same thing and you don't learn from it."

So fear of failure, I believe, is our greatest failure.

Sheila: Do you still have time, after all these years of pastoring, do you still have times where you walk off the platform and think, I missed the boat. Do you still have -- and how do you deal with that?

Paul: I'm a bit of a perfectionist, so I've been riddled with that my whole life. There is not a time where I don't look at it and think, I could have done that. There is a time in my life where I would almost internally abuse myself for those feelings and that was detrimental. I had to learn that insecurity stays with me. Failure is part of the journey. So now I go, okay, so what can I learn from that? And rather than reacting to failure...

A good friend of mine, pastor Brian Houston said to me in the early years of ministry he said, "Paul, why is it when you get on stage you're so different to when you're off stage?"

I said, "What do you mean?" And so he said a few things. I thought, you know why? Because I'm trying to be something I'm not. So when I became settled with who I am, still striving in the right sense for God's gift to be outworked in my life, I found a place I go, okay, I could have done that better. What did I learn? Write it down. Let's do it better next time.

And when you take that mind-set that none of us arrive then you realize that God can meet us there. I think sometime the voice of failure is higher in volume than the voice of God's understanding and we've got to shift that and go, "We're learning. So when did we learn today? What did we learn in the last six months?" I think I have lost a lot of those potential years because nobody said failure is normal. And failure is really failure when you don't make the attempt.

Sheila: But the thing that you've added that really helps me is that if I'm speaking somewhere and I think, oh man that was awful! Instead just acknowledging that it's awful I try and forget about it and move on as opposed to thinking, okay, where could that have been better? That's to me the helpful additional part of learning and changing next time.

Paul: And I think even while you're speaking to me, if something would come out and it was like that's hopeless! And I would be smiling on the outside still preaching on the inside saying, "You're an idiot! You're an idiot." I don't know if I can say that to you.

Sheila: Oh yeah. You can. I say it most days.

Paul: It's kind of like now when something happens that I think is less than, I go, let's pick it up from here. See, so what do we need to deposit? So am I really wanting to impact the audience? Do I want to impress the audience, or do I want to impart? The impartation is just that real -- the more we can be real with who we are and where we're at today and the things that aren't working is the moment we begin to find things we never found before. We're just going to be settled that we can't get it right first time around nor second time around nor third time around but we can just bring who we are.

The best person we can be is a more free us.

Sheila: And you talk in the book about the importance of humility, of actually asking for help. Because sometimes in our failure we just -- we don't even want to acknowledge it in front of other people. Was that a huge thing for you just being able to say, hey, you know what? I might need a little help here.

Paul: And I think all of us would recognize that we're in an outside in world. Everything is around what is social media. We don't show our worst days on social media, it is always our best days. But every movie, everything around us, it's like we live outside in. God wants us to live inside out. When you recognize that, you're going to find people.

Your vulnerability, by the way, will enable other people to get vulnerable as well. So we're going to start there. It really helped me when I talked to Joyce Meyer and I talked to Reinhard Bonnke and I just said, "Do you ever feel the same sort of thing, like intimidated and insecure about getting up to do what you do?" They said, "All the time." I thought, yeah, we're all the same. It's okay. That once we can look failure in the eyes and say this is awesome. I want to fail more often now than I've ever failed before.

Sheila: Because of what you learn?

Paul: Because of what I learn from it.

Sheila: That's brilliant. One of the things that I found really moving and hard in our preshow conversation was you talk about a devastating accident that happened in New Zealand and your son was involved in that. Sometimes you feel from something like that, how could any good come? Can you talk about that just for a minute?

Paul: Well, our son was on a school kind of week away and they were in a canyon and there was a flash flood, and he lost instantly six of his best friends and a teacher he loved. Christian school. They had, that morning even prayed that God would protect everything

that happened. I'll never forget the night that they came home. There wasn't apparently a word spoken in the bus from where they were back to Auckland. As they came out you could just see the devastation.

And for our son, it was horrific. I think he went into a year, year and a half of the deepest, darkest valley. That there were no words that could bring any consoling. You couldn't just come and say, "Well, God is..." It's just like, "Hey, God is still God, bud but you're going to have to find him in this darkness and we're here."

I think there are other times when we go through the darkest and the deepest, the loss of a child, the loss of a parent, someone, particularly in death that passes that seems no positive outcome. But after that year, year and a half, you saw him begin to emerge and it took that long. I don't think there are any pet answers for that to be honest. I think you've just got to stand there with the love that says we don't understand it all, but we're going to walk through this together.

Today he's finding himself again. He's starting to make headway. Still got some questions and I unashamedly would talk about that because all of us are on a pathway.

Sheila: But I love that you gave him the freedom. Because I think when pain is fresh words should be few.

Paul: I love that. Yeah, that's so true. You just need to be there. Only God can bring that to past. I think in the church we want to have everything with a fixer. And it's not like -- some things are... Think about Moses in the wilderness for so long, Abraham; it's like so many went through so many deep things. Let's talk about the real them and the real journey and what that looked like.

Talk about what happened with Stephen's family after the stoning. It's okay to look retrospectively and say, well, God works it all together for good. Yeah, but there is a process. And in the end whatever we lose here in life God has promised that he will bring

it. And in the darkest of dark nights I say to people, "I think light or life works more in death than it does in life itself. And God is going to take us to places we've never been." I think we can help people that are in deep valleys now because of what we've been through as a family, and still have to walk through some issues with that as we all do with ourselves, with our families.

But failure, at the end of the day, once surrendered to God becomes a platform. And that's the thing. We will see more the more we get honest with ourselves and our pathway.

Sheila: I think one of the greatest gifts that Pastor Paul brings is you begin to see it is okay to be human after all.

One of the things that is very much on my heart as we get closer to the Christmas season is some boys and girls around the world who are in a very bad place right now. But we've discovered some friends that will help us to take them on a whole new journey. Would you watch this with me?

On the mission field:

Announcer: This season *LIFE Outreach* wants to continue spreading joy and smiles around the world. We do this in very special ways. We provide shoes for children's feet, and corrective surgery for those who suffer from a cleft palate or a cleft lip condition. Not only is receiving shoes fun for the children but it is a blessing for the mission team. Why? Because they know it helps ensure that the little ones will be protected from disease that can enter their bodies through bare feet.

Ralph: This is what we love to do -- is giving shoes to children. Some children need the shoes because they're worn out. Some children have never owned a pair of shoes. So this is a happy day for these little guys. It is a happy day for us.

Announcer: As for cleft palate surgeries, did you ever think that a trip to a hospital

would bring a smile to the face of a little child? Well, it can once they've had corrective surgery for cleft lip or a cleft palate.

Our mission teams travel to remote locations in various countries to bring children like little Dui to modern clinics like these. Here they receive the best of care, all because the friends of LIFE, moved by compassion make it possible. And once again we are blessed knowing children and their families will experience great joy because of the corrective surgery.

As this Christmas season approaches, we want to continue to bless children around the world by providing them with a new pair of shoes and corrective surgeries that give them a chance for healthy and fulfilling lives.

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: The doctors that we work with are amazing. One of my first trips when I showed up in the clinic in the morning it was something I'd never seen before. All the doctors and the nurses and the families and the children who were waiting to get helped, they had a worship service before they even went in to surgery. And to work with these tremendously skilled medical teams who love Christ and who love people and who show it in a really remarkable way.

So we just want to give you this great opportunity to help us do this. For a little boy or girl born in some of these countries, they're not even allowed to go to school if they have a cleft lip or palate because somehow it's seen as if they are cursed. We want them to know that, no, no, they are not cursed. They are loved by God and seen by God. But you and I are his hands and feet.

So for \$500 we can have one of those cleft palate surgeries performed. And really, it's like a whole new life. Our commitment this Christmas is for 150,000 children to have a

brand-new pair of shoes. For many of them, the very first shoes they've ever had in their lives. We provide these for \$3.60! Have you tried to buy shoes for your kids recently? It is astronomical. But these shoes will last for a long time and literally, in some cases, they will save a life.

So we can do it together. There is a level that we can all kick in. For \$36 you can provide ten pairs of shoes. For \$72 you'll provide shoes for 20 children. And for \$180, 50 children will get a brand-new pair of shoes on Christmas morning.

I think this Christmas might be a little more joyful if we're not so wondering what we're going to do with all this new stuff that we've got for ourselves and for our kids. What a beautiful thing to start with your family that whenever we know Christmas is coming, we think: what could we do this year? So this is something that you could help us with.

So would you go to your phone? Just make the best gift possible. Some of you don't have a lot of spare income. Just do what you can. But when we join together, we can make a huge difference. So please, dial that number on your screen and for any gift at all, we'll send you our new little green Christmas shoe to put on your tree to remember the difference it is making.

So please, go to your phone, dial that number, make the best gift possible and we're going to put some real smiles on some faces this Christmas. Thank you!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack a food and clean water but also from a lack of things we often take for granted like a simple pair of shoes.

Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a new pair of shoes.

And while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections and disease that could lead to crippling consequences and even death.

By responding today you can help immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 150,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will provide 20-pair and a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request this beautifully crafted green crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display at each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more you may also request this keepsake boxed set of *LIFE's* Christmas shoe ornaments. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries. And you may request the beautiful "Safe in the Shepherd's Arms" bronze sculpture.

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

End of video

In the studio:

Sheila: Thank you so much. I appreciate it. To get Paul's book you just go to Paul de Jong N.Z. (New Zealand).com. *Failure Freedom*, understanding failure, unlocking success. This is a great, great book.

I just want to thank you once more for being with us. And our thoughts and prayers will be with you when you go back to New Zealand and hopefully, we'll come "down under" and see you again sometime.

Paul: You need to come. And our prayer is that all of us will just be a real us. Every

time we go down let's step up and learn from that.

Sheila: Beautiful! We'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. God bless!